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PICKFORDS 1750-1920: A STUDY IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

GERARD L. TURNBULL

This thesis is submitted in the University
of Glasgow for the degree of Ph.D., 1972

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List of abbreviations

British Transport Historical Records

CP	Carter Paterson
HL	Historical letters
Pic	Pickford
RAC	Reports and Accounts

Canal Companies

ASHC	Ashby-de-la-Zouche canal
BCN	Birmingham canal navigation
CVC	Coventry canal navigation
GJC	Grand Junction canal
GUC	Grand Union canal
MCC	Macclesfield canal
OXC	Oxford canal
PFC	Peak Forest canal
RGC	Regents canal
STW	Staffordshire & Worcestershire canal
WBC	Warwick & Birmingham canal
WNC	Warwick & Napton canal
WOB	Worcester & Birmingham canal

Railways Companies

GJR	Grand Junction railway
LVM	Liverpool & Manchester railway
LBM	London & Birmingham railway
LNW	London & North Western railway
SER	South Eastern railway

Others

CHP	Charles Pickford papers
FP	Baxendale papers, Framfield Place
KS	The late Hon. D. Pickford papers, King Sterndale Hall
PP	British parliamentary papers
Pic HH	Pickford records, Pickfords' head office, High Holborn
RC	Royal Commission
SC	Select committee

Preface

On several occasions in recent years, Professor T.S. Willan had drawn attention to the importance of the inland carrying trade, especially in the eighteenth century, and its neglect by historians. In his latest study, of Abraham Dent of Kirkby Stephen, he stresses the contribution to the network of trade of the carrier, "a strangely neglected figure." Until the advent of railways the internal distribution of goods depended heavily on the services of the common carriers. Carrying concerns varied in size from the small, one-man business of local interests to large national concerns which operated over long distances and employed large numbers of road vehicles, canal boats, horses and men. The greatest of the national concerns was the firm of Pickford & Co. Founded in the mid-eighteenth century, it alone of its contemporaries on the roads and later competitors on the canals, has survived to the present day.

A full study of the carrying trade in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century still awaits an author. Such a study would be extremely valuable but as the relevant material is likely to be very diffuse it would probably demand several years of painstaking work. In the meantime the following study of the premier carrying firm serves to illustrate some of the major lines of development of the inland carrying trade. For although this study is based on the activities and records of an individual business its main concern is with the development of transportation. There are two main reasons for this.

In the first place, Pickfords' surviving records are too sparse to sustain a 'business history' properly so called. Only

for the twenty years from 1900 is it possible to say much about Pickfords' development as a business unit. The main core of Pickfords' business records is a run of Directors' board and committee minutes from 1901 to 1919: earlier survivals are essentially haphazard, although some pieces have been of considerable value. Pickfords sustained two bad fires, at City Basin in 1825 and Camden Town in 1857, when record books were destroyed, although it is a puzzle why so little has survived from the later nineteenth century. Pickfords' past solicitors have been traced but no legal papers discovered. One collection of such papers, including partnership agreements, court cases and leases of the 1820 to 1840 period, were destroyed in 1917. Other papers relative to the present century were destroyed just a few years before this study was commenced. Supplementary material has been found in family papers and other business records, canal and railway company records, Blue Books, trade directories, newspapers and trade journals. Inevitably such records relate to Pickfords' transportation activities rather than the firm's development as a business unit. Where possible the nature of Pickfords' business growth is sketched in, but only in the last twenty years of the study can more than a summary outline be attempted.

Secondly, during the span of Pickfords' history examined here, well over 150 years, a series of radical changes occurred in the technology of transportation. Each phase, turnpikes, canals, railways, has its own literature, but little attention has been given to the impact of new modes of transportation on existing transport forms. With its long history, Pickfords' experience provides a new and unique view of the familiar flow of transport innovations. What effect did changes in the technology of transportation have on a leading carrying firm, itself both a

producer and consumer of transport services? How easily were new opportunities absorbed and how often did change result in a hostile rather than challenging environment? What were the conditions for success in the carrying trade, especially as explaining Pickfords' unique survival? It is in the answer to questions such as these that this study has a general significance, beyond the confines of Pickfords as an individual business concern. Of course it is invariably easier to pose questions than to answer them. In this case, because of the limits imposed by the nature of the surviving evidence, many potentially interesting questions have to remain unanswered.

During the course of my researches, I have been helped and encouraged by many people, to whom I now offer my thanks. First I would like to thank the archivists of the British Railway Board in London and Edinburgh for access to the records in their care. Since the bulk of Pickfords' records are on public deposit with the B.R.B. at Porchester Road, London, together with the main core of other records used for this study, my work would have been impossible without their assistance. Pickfords itself retains few records pertaining to the time period of this study, but these have been freely available to me, together with the valued assistance and hospitality of Mr. H. Elliot, until recently managing director of Pickfords, Mr. G. Skelton, now managing director of Pickfords Removals Ltd, and Mr. S. Dunford, formerly assistant-general manager. I would also like to thank the librarians of the Guildhall Library, London, the John Rylands and Chethams libraries, Manchester, and the Archives department of the Manchester Central Reference Library for their help.

Other records were made available to me by members of the Pickford and Baxendale families. These were very valuable in supplementing the main series of Pickfords' records with the B.R.B.,

especially for the first eighty-odd years of Pickfords' history. I would like to thank Mr. C.H.Pickford, the late Hon. Miss D. Pickford, Mr. E. Halfpenny, the late Captain Guy Baxendale and Mr. T. Baxendale for the use of records in their possession. In particular I wish to acknowledge my debt to the Hon. Miss Mary Pickford who in the 1930s undertook some research into Pickfords' early history. I was fortunate enough to be able to consult her files, which contained the fruits of many weeks' work on the two main Manchester newspapers in the second half of the nineteenth century. The sections of Chapters 2 and 3 of this study which make substantial use of this source owe a great deal to her original labours.

I was first encouraged in my interest in Pickfords by Mr. A.E. Musson of the University of Manchester, and I would like to thank him for his help in the initial stages of my research. Most of my work was done in Glasgow and I would like to thank Professor S.G. Checkland and my former colleagues, Dr.T. Gourvish, Dr. M.C.Reed and Dr. M. Elvin for their help and stimulating criticism. I have much appreciated their comments, even if I have not always agreed.

Much of the research work for this study was completed in London during long vacations. For several months I was fortunate to enjoy the hospitality of my friends Philip and Marie Glennon, whose house temporarily became a second home. Their kindness and generosity was greatly appreciated.

Many people have done typing for me, and I would like to thank them all, especially my late father, who spent part of his hard-earned retirement typing several of the early chapters of this study: unfortunately he died without seeing its completion. I would like to dedicate my work to his memory.

Finally, I owe a great debt of thanks to my wife, Susan. She has born the main social cost, especially during the final stages of completion, and has helped and encouraged me at every stage.

Pickfords 1750-1920: A study in the development of transportation

Summary

Pickfords was founded in the mid-eighteenth century. By the early nineteenth century it had achieved national prominence, a position which it has retained continuously to the present day. As the only national transport firm now surviving from pre-industrial days, its experience is of particular interest in the study of transport history. This study traces the development of Pickfords from its origins up to 1920.

Until the twentieth century the direct records of the business are relatively few. Only from 1901 is it possible to attempt a sustained analysis of the firm as a business unit, in addition to its place in the context of the transport industry, and the economy in general. However Pickfords' activities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries left their record in other places, especially in contemporary newspapers and trade directories, and the minute books of canal and railway companies. On the basis of these records, together with family papers, it has been possible to reconstitute the main lines of Pickfords' development during these years.

Pickfords' business was that of the common carrier, the transportation of all manner of traffic, including passengers in the early days, initially between London and Lancashire but eventually, after the advent of railways, over the whole country. Pickfords was thus both a producer and consumer of transport services and therefore inevitably affected by the major breaks in

the technology of transportation which followed from the innovation of turnpikes onwards. One of the main themes of this study is an examination of this series of innovations from the viewpoint of Pickfords, their implications for a carrying concern and the nature of Pickfords' response.

Pickfords began as a Manchester based firm, but by the beginning of the twentieth century its main interests were in and around the London area. Pickfords had also by then passed out of the ownership of the Pickford family and had for some years been in the hands of the Baxendale family. Indeed in 1817 the firm had been on the verge of bankruptcy and had largely been saved by the efforts of Joseph Baxendale, one of three new partners then taken into the firm to meet the crisis. Pickfords overcame this crisis, and that resulting from the advent of railways, and thus survived into the twentieth century. However more problems were still to come. Dissension within the firm, a major error of tactics, growing financial difficulties and increasing pressure of competition, all lay behind Pickfords' decision to amalgamate with its major rivals in 1912. The nature of Pickfords' development as a business and the reason for its unique survival to the present provide the second main theme of the study.

Celia: You seem annoyed.

Ld. Mountararat: Annoyed! I should think so! Why this ridiculous protégé of yours is playing the deuce with everything! To-night is the second reading of his Bill to throw the Peerage open to Competitive Examination!

Ld. Tolloller: And he'll carry it, too!

Ld. Mountararet: Carry it? Of course he will! He's a Parliamentary Pickford - he carries everything.

W.S.Gilbert Iolanthe Act II

CHAPTER 1.

THE SETTING

The precise origins of Pickfords are obscure. There is a strong tradition in the firm, formally recorded early in the present century,¹ that its roots reach back to the first half of the sixteenth century.² However the first documentary evidence of Pickfords' existence dates from 1756. In August that year James Pickford informed his customers, "all Gentlemen, Tradesmen and others," that his London waggon which had hitherto left for Manchester each Wednesday from the Blossom's Inn, Lawrence Lane, would in future depart from the Bell Inn, Wood Street.³ It is clear from this that James Pickford had already entered the road haulage business; the starting point was earlier, but how much earlier the available evidence has so far not revealed. Strictly speaking James Pickford was acting as a common carrier, conveying goods and passengers by road between London and Manchester. What sort of a business was it in which he was engaged?

A carrier in the sense in which the term is used here, is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "one who undertakes for hire the conveyance of goods and parcels (usually on certain routes and at fixed times.)"⁴

1 Minutes, Directors' Committee 8 Jan. 1908 Pic 1/14.

2 For a more detailed discussion see appendix 1.

3 Manchester Mercury 3 Aug. 1756. Advertisements were frequently left to run for several weeks: only the date of the first insertion is noted. Except where it has been desired to retain the flavour of the original, spelling and punctuation has been modernised.

4 Oxford English Dictionary Vol. II, C, 133.

In the seventeenth century and for most of the eighteenth it would be necessary to add passengers to the range of custom for which the carrier offered his services. This definition applies only to that part of the inland carrying trade undertaken by the public or common carrier. For there were several categories of persons who performed road transport services, variously differentiated by their legal status, whether part-time or full-time, or the distances over which they carried.⁵

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was fairly common for farmers and small holders generally to perform carrying services. This might be on an ad hoc basis, a back load to fill an otherwise empty waggon returning from London or some other market, or it might be on a more regular basis, the requirement of a lease⁶ or the utilisation in slack periods of otherwise idle farm equipment but with the income from such activities allowed for, for rental purposes, in the terms of the lease.⁷ In aggregate such carrying activities probably represented a substantial proportion of the total volume of road transport services, but individually they were essentially part-time and small-scale. Persons engaged in this line of work would normally carry over relatively short distances but in particular they acted in a private capacity: the essence of this position was that they did not offer a public service.

5 Until there is substantial further research into the structure of the inland carrying trade in this period it is impossible to speak in other than fairly general terms.

6 R.A.Lewis 'Transport for eighteenth century iron works' *Economica*, N.S. Vol. 18 1951

7 T.S.Willan The navigation of the river Weaver in the eighteenth century (Chetham Society publications, 3rd Series, Vol. 3, 1951) passim

This applied especially to those who did more than, say, cart coal for the local town and industries,⁸ but engaged in general carrying activities, again mainly on a local basis. Legally they were classed as private carriers, that is they undertook particular assignments on a person to person basis and were not available for common hire. They were thus free from the legal obligations which applied to the public or common carriers.⁹ This distinction, if rather thin at times in practice, was important; it was the device by which probably a fairly large group of small-men were able to share in the provincial carrying trade.

The common carriers were full-time specialists who offered regular road haulage services for specified routes and places, many of them operating over long distances. Because they explicitly sought public custom, the carriers, without being officially ranked as such, were subject to some of the legal requirements dating from medieval times which applied to the public or 'common' trades.¹⁰ By the eighteenth century the common carriers had to observe a number of recognised, if ill-defined, legal obligations. They had to accept all traffic brought to them for conveyance, at agreed and reasonable rates, for all towns to which they professed to carry. They had to treat the goods entrusted to them with care and accept full responsibility in the event of loss. The carrier was entitled to charge a special

8 J.U.Nef The rise of the British coal industry (1926) esp Vol. I, pt 1, Chap. 2.

9 For the distinction between private and common carriers, J.Crofts Packhorse, waggon and post (1967) Chaps. 5 and 6

10 A.M.Milne and A. Laing The obligation to carry (Institute of Transport Monograph, 1956) p 9 ff. also Crofts Op.Cit. Chap. 5.

rate for particularly valuable items like cash and jewellery and if their value was declared his liability was limited to the extent of that valuation, even if less than the actual value. However it was not uncommon to hide such items in a bundle of goods to avoid the extra cost of a special rate. In this case, it seems, the carrier was liable to the extent of the goods' total actual value. The purpose of such onerous terms was to protect the public from the risk of collusive robberies. The only excepting conditions were Act of God or of the King's enemies.

Common carriers can be categorised, broadly speaking, according to the distances over which they operated. Some were essentially local, perhaps travelling no further than within a day's journey radius of their home base. Others ventured further afield and still others specialised in the long-distance trade, in particular that to London. This sort of break down is illustrated by the range of carriers employed by Abraham Dent of Kirkby Stephen in the later eighteenth century. Some of his carriers travelled the sixty miles to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, whereas others travelled only between Kirkby Stephen and Kendal. One of the prime tasks of this last group was to deliver Dents¹¹ goods to the carriers who operated stage waggons between Kendal and London.¹² This was one of the longest hauls undertaken by common carriers.

11 The precise legal status of the common carriers was not defined until the Carriers' Act of 1830.

12 T.S.Willan An eighteenth century shop-keeper: Abraham Dent of Kirkby Stephen (M.U.P. 1970) p 39 ff.

When James Pickford first appears on the scene, the trade of common carrier was already getting on to be some four hundred years old. In medieval times the demand for road transport services over relatively long distances and on any substantial scale and regular basis probably first appeared in the woollen cloth and corn trades which supplied the London market.¹³ The carriage of general goods, initially no doubt as a back load, apparently grew up in association with those trades.¹⁴ Although the demand for general carrying services was not large - however the volume of goods on the roads, both wheeled and horse traffic, and the ease of communication, should not be underestimated¹⁵ - by the end of the fourteenth century the common carrier was already travelling the roads.¹⁶ The accelerated pace of industrial and economic activity generally from the later fifteenth and throughout the sixteenth century stimulated a considerable expansion of inland trade.¹⁷ By the mid-sixteenth century carriers were already travelling to London on a regular weekly or monthly basis.¹⁸ At the end of the century when Stow was regretting the trend of contemporary developments, "the world runs on wheels with many whose parents were glad to go on foot",¹⁹ the 'long-waggon', the carrier's stage-waggon

13 R.B.Westerfield, Middlemen in English business, particularly between 1660 and 1760 (Yale Univ. Press 1915) Chaps. 2 and 5.
N.S.B.Gras The evolution of the English corn market (Harvard, London & Oxford, 1915)

14 Westerfield Op.cit. pp 282-4 emphasises the background of the cloth trade

15 J.F.Willard 'The use of carts in the fourteenth century' History, N.S.Vol. 17 Oct. 1932, p 246 ff.;
J.E.T.Rogers A history of agriculture and prices in England (Oxford 1902) Vol. I p 95, p 663.

16 Rogers Op. cit. p 95, p 660.

17 W.T.Jackman The development of transportation in modern England (2nd ed. 1962) pp 43-5

18 Gras Op.cit. p 153, note 1; also O.E.D. Vol. II C. 133 citation for 1553/4.

19 J.Stow A survey of London...written in the year 1598 (ed. H. Morley, N.D. ? 1908) p 101.

of later years, had already been introduced and journeyed up to London regularly from various places, including Canterbury, Norwich, Ipswich, and Gloucester.²⁰

From the seventeenth century onwards the common carrier appears as an increasingly familiar part of the country's transport services, both for passengers and goods.²¹ Before stage coaches came into common use the carrier's waggon accommodated upper class patronage, including the diarist Evelyn.²² It was only in the eighteenth century that this form of conveyance was restricted to the poorer classes of society. By the 1620s the Kendal carriers were already travelling to London.²³ Indeed a pattern of recognisable routes was soon laid down and certain inns in the City of London came to be recognised as the regular arrival and departure points of various groups of carriers.²⁴ The extent of this development is demonstrated by the publication in 1637 of John Taylor's survey of carriers and the inns they used in London.²⁵ The survey shows that the essential structure of the inland carrying trade had already been formed.

20 E.A.Pratt A history of inland transport and communication in England (1912) p 35

21 N.Penney (ed) The household account book of Sarah Fell of Swarthmore Hall (C.U.P. 1920);
J.H.Markland 'Some remarks on the early use of carriages in England, and on the modes of travelling by our ancestors' Archaeologia, Vol. XX, 1824, p 443 ff.: also
J.Wake and D.C.Webster (eds) 'The letters of David Eaton to the Third Earl of Cardigan, 1725 -1732' The Northamptonshire Record Society Vol. XXIV (1971)
F.Tyrer & J.J.Bagley (eds) 'The great diurnal of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire Vol. 1 1702 -1711; Vol. 2, 1712-1719. The Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire Vol. 110 (1968) Vol. 112 (1970)

22 As cited by O.E.D. (Waggon) Vol. 13, W. p 15. This includes a reference to the daughter of a Sir W. Dugdale travelling to London by the Coventry Waggon in 1660.

23 G.Ornsby (ed) Selections from the household books of Lord William Howard of Naworth Castle, (Surtees Society, Vol. 68, 1878)

24 Jackman Op.cit. p 45, citing Harrison's Description of England in Shakespeare's youth.

25 J. Taylor The Carriers Cosmographie (1637). The pages are not numbered but the towns are listed alphabetically.

Similar accounts of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries reiterate the same structure.²⁶ Many of the inns mentioned remained associated with the various groups of carriers listed for many years to come. The Manchester carriers were described by Taylor as follows:-

"The Carriers of Manchester, doe lodge at the Beare in Bassingshaw, they do come on Thursdaes or Fridaies. The Carriers of Manchester, doe likewise lodge at the signe of the Axe in Aldermanbury.

The Carriers of Manchester, doe also lodge at the two neck'd Swan in Lad Lane (between great Wood street, and Milk street end) they come every second Thursday; also there do lodg Carriers that doe passe through divers other parts of Lancashire."

Of the inns mentioned here, Pickfords used two, the White Bear and the Swan with Two Necks, at various times. The Castle Inn, Wood Street, immediately adjacent to the Swan, was Pickfords' first permanent headquarters in London.

The growing importance of the common carriers is attested by the increasing attention paid to them by King and Parliament. In 1623 James I issued a proclamation, repeated by his son six years later, which regulated the type of waggon and number of horses the carriers could use and the maximum weight they could carry, because of the severe damage being caused to the public highways.²⁷ Between 1670 and 1748 about a dozen Highway Acts were passed which included provisions to control carriers, most of them specifying the maximum weight of loads or the number of horses to be used. The most important of these Acts was that passed in 1692 (3 William & Mary C.12) whose purpose was to bring the carriers under a

26 De Laune The present state of London (1681); Angliae Metropolis or The present state of London (1690); Anon The Intelligencer: or, Merchants Assistant (1738); from 1740 the London directories become increasingly useful.

27 Pratt Op.cit. p 43 Citing Macpherson's 'Annals of Commerce'

further form of control. In response to complaints that the carriers had combined in order to raise prices, carriage rates were brought under statutory control. At their annual Easter meeting the Justices of the Peace in each county were required to fix the maximum rate of carriage within their area of jurisdiction.²⁸

The carriers remained the target of accusations of monopoly²⁹ and were also the subject of continual parliamentary measures to preserve the condition of the roads, especially by the promotion of broad wheel waggons,³⁰ in the face of the rising volume of traffic passing over them. However throughout the eighteenth century the inland carrying trade continued to flourish³¹ and the rate of expansion of the trade accelerated as the century advanced.³²

Taylor received little co-operation from the carriers whom he approached for information about their trade, but instead met with "hard and unsavoury answers."

- 28 For a discussion of the J.P.s' assessments under this Act see T.S.Willan 'The Justices of the Peace and the rates of land carriage, 1692-1827.' Journal of Transport History Vol. V, (1962) pp 197-204, and W.Albert 'The Justices' rates for land carriage 1748-1827, reconsidered' Transport History Vol. I (1968) pp 105-129. In the course of his article Albert comments on the nature and significance of Parliament's attention to the carriers after 1748.
- 29 J.T.Bunce History of the Corporation of Birmingham Vol. 1 (1878) p 49;
Westerfield Middlemen in English business p 137
- 30 Jackman Op. cit. p 215 ff.
- 31 Westerfield Op. cit. p 284
D. Defoe The complete English tradesman (4th ed. 1738) Vol. I Chap. 26, Vol. II, Chap. 18.
- 32 W.G.Rimmer Marshalls of Leeds Flax Spinners 1788-1886 (C.U.P. 1960) p 34. Rimmer comments that the carriers' services from Leeds increased rapidly after 1770. This would seem to hold good for the country as a whole.

"In some places I was suspected for a projector, or one that had devised some trick to bring the Carriers under some new form of taxation; and sometimes I was held to have been a man-taker, a Serjeant or bailiff to arrest or attach men's goods or beasts; indeed I was scarce taken for an honest man amongst the most of them: all of which suppositions I was enforced often times to wash away with two or three jugs of Beer at most of the Inns I came to." 33

De Laune also complained of similar treatment.

At least in these early days the carriers were a close knit group, and clearly suspicious of strangers who asked questions about their business, and with good reason, for their trade was accompanied by the ever-present risk of violent robbery. England's roads were far from safe and although the more famous highwaymen concentrated on the richer picking of the stage coaches, the carriers did not escape attention. The main danger was on the approaches to London, the carriers sought to reduce their individual risk by travelling in convoys.³⁴ Despite such measures, attacks were common, even in the mid-eighteenth century.³⁵ Indeed as late as 1788 the Manchester Mercury reported an attack on George Worthington, the Manchester and York carrier, who had been robbed near Miles Platting (about three miles from Manchester) and "most inhumanly murdered by being

33 Taylor Carrier's Cosmographie

34 Crofts Packhorse waggon and post Chaps. 5, 7.

35 O.E.D. Vol. 10, robbery of the Bath stage waggon in 1761; for other attacks in the Manchester area, Manchester Mercury 24 April, 11 Dec. 1753.

shot dead with a Pistol, or some other Fire-arms, loaded with Pewter slugs on the King's Highway."³⁶ Casual thieving at inns of call along the road was also a problem.³⁷

The reason for the carriers' defensive measures and hostility to enquiries no doubt owed something to the fact that they frequently carried money and valuables among their consignments. It was a regular practice for the carriers to take letters, bills and cash for their customers, in part because the cost of postage was so high.³⁸ Moreover the value of individual consignments going by road could be considerable. The evidence is slender but there are reports of the later eighteenth century of the contents of waggons being destroyed by fire in which their value is assessed in the region of £1,000.³⁹ In similar vein, in 1767 Nathaniel Cartwright, a pillow-lace dealer of Newport Pagnell set off "on a seven week circuit into the North and by Gloucester (sic) with above £1,000 of lace."⁴⁰ Such commodities, although of substantial total value, would not be too easily converted into ready cash, but large sums of money were also carried. In the 1780s Pickfords regularly conveyed up to £200 at a time for Samuel Oldknow from his warehouse agents in London.⁴¹

36 Manchester Mercury, 22 April, 1788.

37 Copland Roads and their traffic p 82.

38 Willan An eighteenth century shop-keeper pp 46-7: on one occasion the postage on two returned bills was 2/7½d; generally, see Markland 'Some remarks on the early use of carriages.' Archaeologia Vol. XX (1824), and Penney The household account book of Sarah Fell

39 Copland Op. cit. pp 79-81; also Westerfield Op.cit. p 283

40 C.Freeman Pillow lace in the East Midlands (printed privately by Luton Museum and Art Gallery, 1958) p 16. I must thank my colleague Mr. G.F.R.Spenceley for this reference: also D. Defoe A tour through the whole island of Great Britain (7th ed, 4 Vols. 1769) Vol. III p 126.

41 G.Unwin Samuel Oldknow and the Arkwrights (M.U.P. 1924) Chaps. 4 and 5.

Such sums were not exceptional even earlier in the century. The element of risk also extended to the passengers who travelled in the carrier's waggon, as evidenced by Roderick Random's experiences on his journey to London.⁴²

Organisation among the carriers was thus a prominent feature of their trade. It was commonly denounced as monopolistic and certainly the carriers tended to act in combination when announcing an increase in their rates.⁴³ Such actions would seem however, to be more than an expression of narrow self interest. The whole climate within which the carriers operated, at least until the later eighteenth century, emphasised co-operation rather than competition. This stemmed partly from the need to meet common dangers and partly also from the custom of all the carriers from a particular town or area frequenting the same two or three inns in London.

Some carriers were no doubt small men of limited resources but the group who are important here, those engaged in the long distance trade to and from London, were evidently men of considerable means and a certain scale of business. This is apparent from both direct and indirect evidence. Given the conditions of unlimited liability and the known value of consignments, the carrier needed substantial resources to meet possible claims for loss.

42 T. Smollet The adventures of Roderick Random (1st pub. 1748; 1821 ed. of collected novels quoted) Chap. 12, also 8-11. The novel is accepted as an accurate description of the contemporary scene, as based on Smollett's own journey from Scotland to London in November, 1739.

43 Albert 'The Justices' rates... reconsidered' Transport History Vol. 1 (1968) pp 106-7; also Chap. 2 below

Conversely, a customer would need to be satisfied of a carrier's ability to meet all claims before entrusting valuable items to him.⁴⁴ An early eighteenth century source in fact refers to the common carriers as "generally men of credit, and capable of giving security for their regular carriage."⁴⁵ A possible off-set would be to insure against loss for goods in transit but only a single instance of this has been found, and then from the last decade of the eighteenth century.⁴⁶ It is likely that the risk would have been too high much before that date for an insurance company to be willing to underwrite it, except at a very high premium.⁴⁷

In general, therefore, the carrier probably had to rely on his own resources. From odd bits of evidence it would seem that these could be quite substantial. The advertised sale, in 1766, of Thomas Stevens' business, a Colchester to London carrier, claimed that he had "got a very good fortune, besides bringing up and educating a large family in a handsome mansion: so, with care and industry, there is a manifest prospect for any other person, so qualified, not only to get a maintenance, but a good deal of money." Robert Clarke of Leicester, who advertised his business for sale in 1793, had traded between Sheffield and London "with great success." His stock in trade

⁴⁴ Crofts Op.cit. Chap. 5.

⁴⁵ Quoted by Westerfield Op. cit. p 284

⁴⁶ Thomas Sleath & Co. of Manchester insured with the Phoenix company of London. Manchester Mercury 30 Aug. 1796. Unfortunately the records of this company have not been available for consultation. A check with a sample of the fire policy registrations of the Royal Exchange Assurance Company, on deposit at the Guildhall Library, London, did not reveal any such business being transacted.

⁴⁷ Crofts Op. cit. p 33.

included 14 nine inch (i.e. broad-wheel) waggon, 2 narrow waggon, and 136 horses with their equipment. Clarke also offered warehouse and stabling accommodation at Sheffield, Leicester and all other places used by him on the road, and a certain proportion of the purchase money.⁴⁸ James Pickford himself came of yeoman stock and his son Matthew made enough money to be able to acquire a coat of arms and the title of 'gentleman.'⁴⁹

It is significant that James Pickford, as the substance of his advertisement quoted above indicates, based his business on the use of stage waggon, for there is much confusion as to when waggon came into common use. A recent writer states that "until at least the middle of the eighteenth century all goods sent from Derby or Nottingham to Manchester or London, all the Yorkshire clothing products, and all the Manchester and Coventry wares were transported on horseback."⁵⁰ This would seem to be an exaggeration, at least for traffic between Manchester and London.

The volume of wheeled traffic even in medieval times should not be underestimated. Royal officials had frequent occasion to use carts, for the conveyance of cash or legal documents, while the transport requirements of the King's armies, in years of regular warfare, provided substantial

48 Both of these examples are from Copland Op.cit. pp 76-77
Clarke's business was bought by the Pickfords.

49 See below Chaps. 2 and 4.

50 Crofts Op.cit. p 3. Substantially the same position is taken by Jackman Transportation in modern England p 141; S.&B. Webb English local government: the story of the King's highway, (1913) Chap. 5 and appendix pp 76-7; P. Mantoux The Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century (1961 ed) p 111.

additional demand. Indeed it has been argued that during the fourteenth century more traffic went by wheeled transport than by packhorse.⁵¹ The 'long waggon', or stage waggon, a roomy, covered vehicle capable of accommodating up to twenty passengers and several hundredweight of goods, was introduced in the 1560s.⁵² By the early seventeenth century it probably absorbed a major share of the demand for transport services in the home counties, especially for the supply of the London food market.⁵³ It would generally be accepted that by the beginning of the eighteenth century the stage waggon was in common use within a hundred mile radius of London, except for Sussex where the heavy clay soils made for particularly difficult road conditions. How far it was used beyond that range, if at all, especially as compared with packhorses, is more contentious. Any realistic quantitative assessment of their relative importance is quite impossible.

The belief in the primacy of the packhorse in this outer region until the later eighteenth century ultimately hinges on the further belief that until then road conditions were impossibly bad and could not support much wheeled traffic. The condition of the roads will be discussed more fully later; it is sufficient to suggest here that their state of disrepair has been much exaggerated. Briefly, it has been noted by

51 J.F. Willard 'The use of carts in the fourteenth century' History, N.S. Vol. 17 Oct. 1932 p 246 ff.

52 Pratt History of inland transport p 35, citing Stow

53 Crofts Op. cit. p 8 finds a close correspondence between the area where he believes heavy wheeled traffic was firmly established at this time and the chief grain area delineated by Gras for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

several recent writers that a basic network of arterial highways, and many others besides, had already been turnpiked by 1760.⁵⁴ Doubtless many roads had to be reconstructed in later years, but even modest improvements could not fail to have some effect. Some respected contemporaries believed there had been considerable progress at least in their own areas in the thirty odd years prior to 1760. Homer believed that an "astonishing revolution" had been accomplished;⁵⁵ Malachy Postlethwayte that costs had fallen by a third because better roads allowed heavier weights to be carried over larger distances with the same number of horses.⁵⁶

The contemporary evidence is not, however, free from problems of interpretation. Defoe, writing in the 1720s, would imply that the foodstuffs and other goods brought to London from the home counties went by waggon but that the conveyance of manufactures from the north depended on packhorses.⁵⁷ Neither Taylor or De Laune are sufficiently precise in their information concerning carriers' services for it to be determined what form of conveyance was used.

- 54 M. Flinn Origins of the Industrial Revolution (1966) p 96; W. Albert Op.cit. p 122, note 27; H.Heaton The Yorkshire woollen and worsted industries (Oxford 1920) p 399; R.G.Wilson 'Transport dues as indices of economic growth 1775-1820' Economic History Review 2nd Series, Vol. XIX (1966) p 111; A. Thomas Geographical aspects of the development of transport and communications affecting the pottery industry of north Staffordshire during the eighteenth century, (Manchester University M.A. thesis, 1933) p 52.
- 55 H.Homer An enquiry into the means of preserving and improving the publick roads of this kingdom (Oxford 1767) p 8.
- 56 Pratt Op.cit. pp 86-7, quoting Malachy Postlethwayte's Dictionary (1745) article on Roads
- 57 Defoe Complete English tradesman Vol. I Chap. 25, Vol. II Chap. 18.

It is noticeable, however, that all the references to packhorse gangs in the first edition (1681) of De Laune are omitted in the second edition (1690).⁵⁸ More precise information is provided by The Intelligencer: or Merchants Assistant (1738). This volume lists only one packhorse service; all the others were by waggon, even some by 'fly-waggon' were mentioned. It does not, of course, follow that because packhorse services were not mentioned they did not exist - especially as their continuance is known from other evidence - but it does seem reasonable to suggest that they are unlikely to have predominated.

It is known that packhorse gangs travelled between Manchester and London and Liverpool and London in the mid-eighteenth century: indeed Liverpool lacked a road able to take wheeled traffic until 1760. Packhorse gangs were offered for sale in Manchester in 1747 and 1757.⁵⁹ However, even at the beginning of the century waggons were said to travel between London and Wigan.⁶⁰ Stage waggons operated between Manchester and London by the end of 1739,⁶¹ and a stage waggon business operating between Warrington, Liverpool and London was offered for sale in Manchester in 1749.⁶²

58 De Laune Present state of London (1681); Angliae Metropolis (1690).

59 Manchester Magazine 21 April, 1747, quoted by A.P. Wadsworth and J. De Lacy Mann The cotton trade and industrial Lancashire, 1600-1780 (M.U.P. reprint 1965) p 220, note 4; Manchester Mercury, 26 July, 1757.

60 Pratt Op.cit. p 36, Citing C. Leigh The natural history of Lancashire, Cheshire and the Peak of Derbyshire (1700)

61 Thomas Op.cit. p 131, quoting The Lancashire Journal 1 Oct., 1739.

62 Wadsworth & Mann Op.cit. p 220 note 4, quoting The Manchester Magazine 25 April 1749. Liverpool was presumably served by packhorse from Warrington.

Other services to Manchester, and Lancashire and Cheshire generally, are recorded for 1753.⁶³ So stage waggon were in use between London and the north, including Manchester, some years before 1750 and from that decade they were seemingly the more, and packhorses the less, common. Off the main routes, however, e.g. across the Pennines, packhorses retained their importance.

Another misapprehension is that the roads were impassable in winter. James Pickford would have been a strange animal indeed to have adopted a business in which the capital employed, which was not unsubstantial, was rendered idle for several months in the year. There is nothing in the available evidence to indicate that the carriers hibernated during the winter months. An extra day's travelling time was evidently allowed compared with the summer months,⁶⁴ and the J.P.s practice of assessing a higher rate for winter than for summer is familiar enough. It would seem that the differential between the two rates declined overtime by fifty percent or more.⁶⁵ No doubt the condition of the roads deteriorated in winter and made life more difficult, but not so bad that all traffic should cease. The Intelligencer listed the departure of carriers'

63 Manchester Mercury 30 Oct. 1753; T.Baines History of the commerce and town of Liverpool (London & Liverpool 1852) p 418.

64 Baines Op.cit. p 418.

65 See Willan 'Justices of the Peace and rates of land carriage' Journal of Transport History Vol. V. (1962) p 197 ff; Albert 'The Justices ' rates...reconsidered' Transport History Vol. I (1968) p 105 ff.

services, at the stated times, as "always". The regularity of road transport services from the 1760s has been demonstrated in the experience of Abraham Dent of Kirkby Stephen, whose orders were dispatched to London by the Kendal waggons all the year round, many of them in the winter months. They all seemed to arrive, and in the time expected. As Professor Willan comments, "the real problem of eighteenth century road transport was not the state of the roads as the cost of carriage."⁶⁶

Hard evidence as to the cost of road transport services during this period is conspicuous chiefly by its absence. Assessed rates varied greatly in different parts of the country at the same time; actual cost figures are so random as to be virtually useless as far as meaningful generalisations are concerned.⁶⁷ Rates were perhaps cheaper along the main routes and the carriers' charges seem to have varied according to weight, size and risk.⁶⁸ As far as relative costs are concerned it is a common observation that only commodities of high intrinsic value could absorb road charges, yet the odd example suggests that these were not always especially high. The cost of conveying Newcastle steel by road from London to Birmingham added some five per cent to the price.⁶⁹ The freight charge of one of Dent's consignments

66 Willan An eighteenth century shop-keeper p 80, 99-100, 110.

67 For the relationship between actual costs and assessed rates, see the articles by Willan and Albert.

68 Copland Roads and their traffic p 69.

69 Flihn Origins of the Industrial Revolution p 96.

was less than 2½% of its total value.⁷⁰ In neither case does the charge seem excessive, but both referred to commodities of some value.

Since James Pickford operated between Manchester and London what, finally, was the framework of communications between the two places? By the mid-eighteenth century, London was already an important centre for much of Manchester's trade and commercial organisation.⁷¹ Access to the London market was of supreme importance, but as an inland town Manchester necessarily depended on land transport or road and river links to the nearest port. At the time, Manchester was not particularly well endowed with transport facilities. The Mersey & Irwell river improvement scheme of 1721 provided a valuable water link with the port of Liverpool but costs remained high and traffic was subject to all the well-known delays and drawbacks of river transport. Bad roads between Manchester and Liverpool had been the main stimulus to the promotion of the Mersey & Irwell scheme.⁷² Roads had been poor in and around Manchester generally but by the 1750s steps were being taken to improve their condition. Many of the roads emanating from Manchester were already under the control of turnpike trusts, although not all the trusts prosecuted their task of road repair with equal energy.⁷³

70 Willan Op.cit. p 109

71 Wadsworth & Mann Op.cit. p 236.

72 Ibid p 219

73 Harrison 'The development of the turnpike system in Lancashire and Cheshire' Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society Vol. IV (1886) p 80.
A.H.Arkle 'Early Liverpool coaching' Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire Vol. 73 (1921) p 6.

When James Pickford first appears on the scene Manchester was still largely land locked, dependant on a road network which had only recently been improved.

Traffic was conveyed to London from Manchester either by land all the way or by water, that is, by river and sea, with varying reliance on connecting road links. Of the rival modes of transportation, the latter would undoubtedly take the greater proportion of the available traffic.

There were two chief routes by river and sea to London, by way of Liverpool or Hull. Liverpool, being the nearer, probably drew the greater volume of traffic. In 1753 the launching of a new boat in Manchester for the river trade to Liverpool drew the comment that further launchings were to be expected "as the navigation is considerably increased within these late years."⁷⁴ An advertisement the following year announcing increases in freight rates between Liverpool and London suggests this route was regularly adopted. The alternative was to send goods by road to Wakefield, from there by river to Hull and thence to London. This route was promoted by the Airmin Company, which was set up probably in the September or October of 1752. By the middle of 1753 sufficient traffic had been attracted for the company to open a packing plant in Manchester and introduce a weekly waggon service to Wakefield. The boats from Hull docked at Chamberlain's wharf in Southwark.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Manchester Mercury 17 April, 1753.

⁷⁵ Ibid 24 July 1753; also Wadsworth & Mann Op.cit. p 220; L. W. Moffit England on the eve of the Industrial Revolution (1925) p 150.

Although cheaper, coastal shipping had its own drawbacks, including delays in bad weather and even total cessation in times of war.⁷⁶ However the demand in Manchester for road services was more than for just an emergency alternative: there was a continuous need for commercial information and also for the carriage of goods where speed, or security, or even convenience were important considerations. Passenger travel from Manchester was restricted until March 1760 when a coach service direct to London was introduced.⁷⁷ Previously it had been necessary to journey on horse-back either the whole distance or, from June 1757, the eighteen miles to Warrington from where a coach left for London.⁷⁸ Rigorous as the normal coach journey was, with long hours of travel, hasty meals and little sleep, it must still have been a welcome advance.

Before 1772, when the first directory was published, it is difficult to get any comprehensive impression of the scale of the road carrying trade in Manchester. In the 1750s there were about six carriers operating between London and Manchester; the regularity of their service varied from one to four departures a week.⁷⁹ Although numbers no doubt increased over time, the only reliable figure is for 1765, when ten carriers signed a joint advertisement giving notice

76 J.D.Marshall (ed) The autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster (M.U.P. 1967) pp 94-5; T.S.Ashton Economic fluctuations in England 1700-1800 (Oxford 1959) p 81 and the references there.

77 Manchester Mercury 2 Oct., 1759, 4 March 1860.

78 T.Baines & W. Fairbairn Lancashire and Cheshire, past and present (N.D.) Vol. II part III p 105

79 London directories for these years.

of an increase in stage waggon rates between London and Manchester.⁸⁰ Road communication was not confined to London. By the mid 1760s Manchester had direct road links with Bristol, Nottingham and Birmingham and certainly many other places besides.⁸¹ In 1772 forty-six carriers were listed in the trade directory, of whom six provided regular services to London. Most of the others operated to the adjacent towns of Lancashire, Cheshire, Derbyshire and the West Riding, but some went as far as Shrewsbury and Cambridge.⁸²

By 1756, when the history of Pickfords effectively begins, the inland carrying trade was firmly established not only in the trade and commerce of Manchester but in the British economy as a whole.

80 Manchester Mercury 24 Sept. 1765

81 At this time Birmingham had land communications with 168 other towns. Bunce Op.cit. Vol. I p 49

82 Manchester directory (Raffald) 1772 p 55 ff.

CHAPTER 2

JAMES, MARTHA AND MATTHEW PICKFORD

Harrop's Manchester Mercury, GENERAL ^{AND} ADVERTISER.

From TUESDAY August 17, to TUESDAY August 24, 1758

[No. 138] Weekly Price 1s. 6d. & 1s. 3d. & 1s. 1d.

This is to acquaint all Gentlemen, Tradesmen, and Others,

THAT JAMES PICKFORD, the

London and Manchester Waggoner, has removed his Waggon from the Blossom's Inn, in Lawrence Lane, to the Bell Inn, in Wood Street, Cheapside, from whence it goes every Wednesday: And his other Waggon goes every Saturday, as usual, from the White Bear in Basinghall Street.

Each Waggon, for the Carriage of Goods and Passengers, at reasonable Rates, goes by and through the Towns undermentioned, viz. Newcastle-under-Line, Congleton, Macclesfield, Stockport, to Manchester; and delivers Goods &c. for Ashton-under-Line, Oldham, Rochdale, Bury, Bolton, and other adjacent Places. At which Places, Gentlemen, &c. may depend on having their Goods, &c. safely delivered,

By Their humble Servant,

JAMES PICKFORD.

N. B. No Money, Plate, Jewels, China-Ware, Glass, or Writings will be accounted for, unless a true Account of them is delivered to the Book-keeper: And constant Attendance is given every Day at the abovesaid Inns in London, to agree with Passengers to take in Goods.

JOHN JONES. Book-keeper to both Waggoners.

This is to acquaint all Gentlemen, Tradesmen and Others, that James Pickford the London and Manchester Waggoner, has removed his Waggon from the Blossom's Inn, in Lawrence Lane to the Bell Inn, in Wood Street, Cheapside, from whence it goes every Wednesday, and his other Waggon goes every Saturday, as usual, from the White Bear in Basinghall Street.

Each Waggon, for the Carriage of Goods and Passengers, at reasonable Rates, goes by and through the Towns undermentioned, viz.

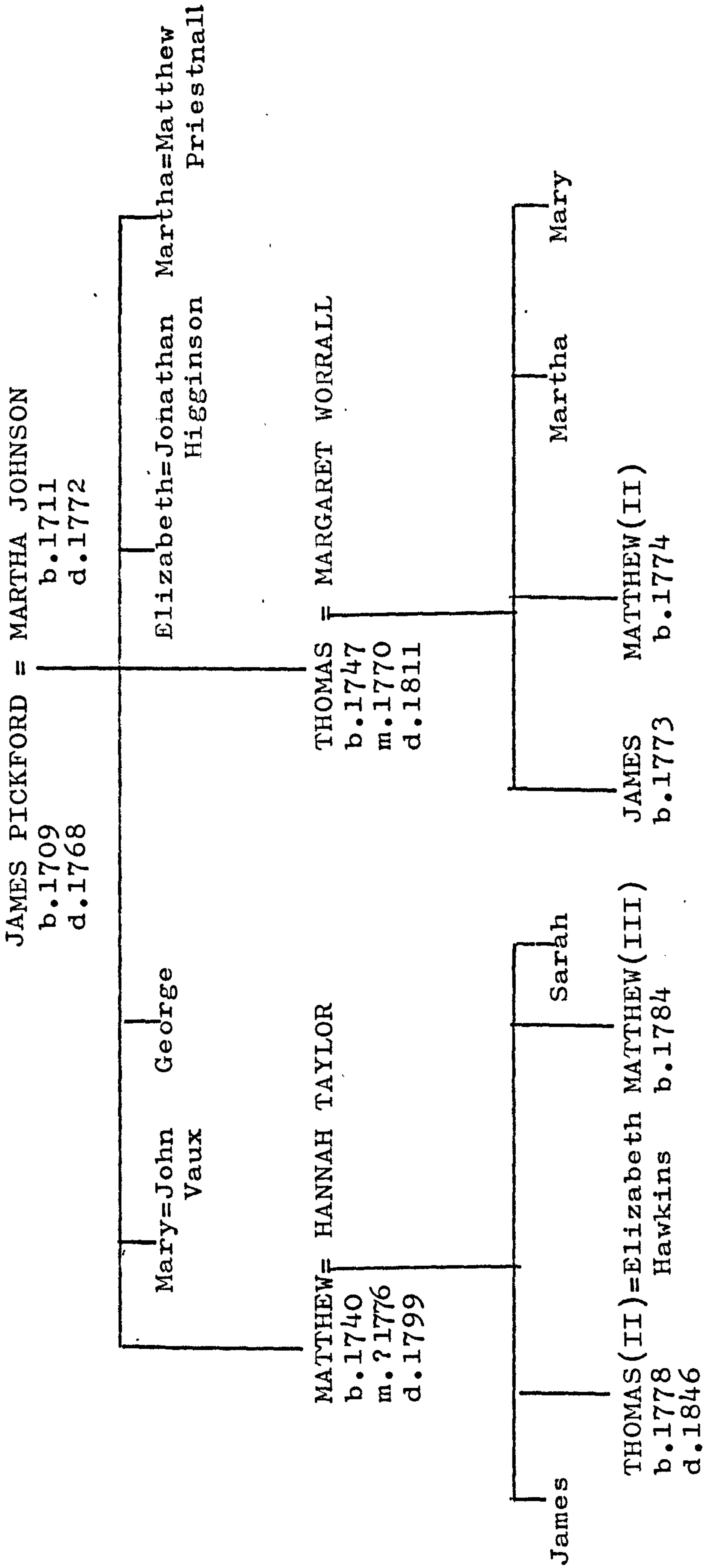
Newcastle-under-Line, Congleton, Macclesfield, Stockport to Manchester; and delivers Goods, etc., for Ashton-under-Line, Oldham, Rochdale, Bury, Bolton, and other adjacent places. At which places, Gentlemen, etc. may depend on having their Goods, etc. safely delivered

By their humble Servant,

James Pickford

N.B. No Money, Plate, Jewels, China-ware, Glass or Writings will be accounted for, unless a true account of them is delivered to the Book-keeper: And constant attendance is given every Day at the above said Inn, in London, to agree with Passengers to take in Goods.

John Jones. Book-keeper to both Waggoners



Like the evidence relating to the origins of Pickfords, that concerned with the early years of the firm is equally sparse. Little is known of James Pickford himself. He was 59 when he died in May 1768 and ^{so} was born in 1708 or 9. Few other personal details of him are known. Even the date of his marriage to Martha Johnson, of whom, again, few details survive, can only be roughly determined by the birth of his eldest son, Matthew, in 1740. There were six children to their marriage of whom two, Matthew and Thomas, were in time engaged in the carrying business. One of the daughters, Elizabeth, married a carrier, Jonathan Higginson, who also operated between Manchester and London. James originally lived at Adlington in the parish of Prestbury, Cheshire, but at some unspecified time moved to the nearby village of Poynton, the place of his death.¹

It is clear from James Pickford's advertisement of August 1756, that he was already active in the road carrying business between Manchester and London but there is no indication as to how long he had been so engaged. He described himself simply as 'the London & Manchester Waggoner' and did not claim the status of 'old' or 'constant' stage-waggoner as others did.² The most promising place to look

1 James Pickford's move from Adlington was some time after 1747. A lease of 25 March 1788 between Sir George Warren of Poynton and Matthew Pickford refers back to the original, dated 19 Jan. 1747, between Lady Elizabeth Warren and others and James Pickford of Adlington. CHP/5. The land concerned was in Poynton and this may well have been the occasion of James' removal. James Pickford's gravestone in Prestbury churchyard names him as of Poynton and the family long retained a close connection with the village.

2 See Manchester Mercury 30 Oct. 1753, 26 June 1759.

for evidence of any prior activities is the London trade directories of the period. However they have failed to yield any positive results. Directories which included information on the departure of stage coaches and waggons were published in 1752, 1755 and 1758. In all three, services for Manchester are listed from the Bell Inn and Blossom's Inn, two of the inns mentioned in James' notice, but none of them on a day of departure which coincides with that stated by James. Pickford's use of the White Bear in Basinghall Street probably offers the best chance of identifying his services. In these years the White Bear seems to have been particularly associated with carriers operating to the east and north-east of England, so that James' use of it for one of his Manchester waggons would have been exceptional. However the White Bear does not appear in any of these directories as being used by the Manchester carriers.³

Assuming, as has been argued elsewhere,⁴ that James Pickford himself started the family's interest in carrying, say by the purchase of an existing business as a going concern, what would have been his capital needs and from where would he have acquired the necessary resources? Although not stated in his advertisement, it is most probable that James operated waggons from Manchester twice a week, the same as from London. For reasons explained below,⁵

3 Indeed it is difficult to relate Pickfords' known services to the entries in the various directories until the 1780s.

4 Appendix 1.

5 see p.3 ?

it would have taken six broad wheel waggons with their full complement of nine horses each to operate such a service, and this is exactly the number of waggons and horses which Pickford is known to have owned less than twelve months later.⁶ What this meant in terms of capital employed is extremely difficult to estimate.

There is no available data for the carrying trade in the mid-eighteenth century, especially concerning the cost of broad-wheel waggons or waggon horses. The price of carriage horses in Cambridge, an unweighted average of five observations from 1751 to 1760 inclusive, averaged approximately £19.7.0d each,⁷ but it would be pressing the evidence too far to assume that the price of waggon horses in Manchester was of the same order. Agricultural price data is equally uninformative. Price movements of crops and meats are readily available for this period, but very little for waggons, horses or implements. The only data even remotely usable is probably that scattered through Arthur Young's observations on his tours through various parts of England.⁸ According to Young the average price of a farm waggon in the late 1760s was £20.⁹ On this basis

6 Manchester Mercury 7 June 1757,

7 Rogers History of agriculture and prices Vol VII, part 1, pp 304-6.

8 A.Young A six month's tour through the north of England (4 Vols, 2nd ed 1771); A.Young The farmer's tour through the east of England (4 Vols 1771). The various county reports to the Board of Agriculture in the 1790s are disappointing in this respect. Few cost figures appear and in any case the French wars were already pushing prices upwards by then.

9 This figure recurs regularly in Young's two books. On the basis of the Schumpeter-Gilboy producers' goods price index, prices were probably a little higher in the later 1760s than in the mid-1750s.

B.R.Mitchel (ed) Abstract of British historical statistics (C.U.P. 1962) p 469.

James Pickford's six waggons, which would most likely have been bigger and more expensive than their agricultural equivalent, would have cost, at new price, £120. Horses cost perhaps £10, which would value Pickford's stock at £540. So waggons and horses together might be assessed at £660. To this would have to be added the cost of harness and other tackle, of which no assessment can be made. It is not known, of course, whether James Pickford acquired his stock at new or knock-down price.

There is no way of knowing how wide of the mark this estimate, admittedly little more than a rough guess, might be, but if it is even approaching the right order of magnitude, the capital cost was quite substantial for that time. In terms of initial fixed investment, James Pickford's requirements would seem to compare not unfavourably with those of his near contemporaries in the manufacturing sector. For example Samuel Oldknow in his early days possessed total assets of some £2,600, of which the share of fixed capital was quite small.¹⁰ Similarly the original fixed capital of the Plæesley mill established by Henry Hollins, Thomas Oldknow and partners was £3,789; total assets were valued at £4,195. This, however, is to be set against a partnership of five, the two senior members of which, Hollins and Oldknow, were already successful businessmen in their own right.¹¹ It is also noteworthy that the initial capital of Carron company, unusually large at £12,000 but explained by the nature of the concern, was contributed in units of £500.¹²

10 Unwin Samuel Oldknow and the Arkwrights pp 13-17

11 S. Pigott Hollins. A study of industry 1784-1949 (1949) p 21 ff.

12 R.H.Campbell The Carron company (1961) p 123

These examples came from the big or notably successful manufacturing concerns: James Pickford's individual capital commitment was broadly comparable.

James Pickford's capital needs were thus probably quite substantial. It is not known how easily or in what ways they might have been acquired. Because so little is known about him, there is no possibility of deriving clues from friends or associates or, that other fertile source of funds, from his marriage. What likelihood is there that Pickford could have met his needs from his own resources? This is not impossible, for a number of reasons. By implication from earlier discussion, James could not have been a poor man. As a common carrier he would need certain resources in order to undertake the risks of unlimited liability and provide the necessary security to customers. Spare resources would also be necessary to absorb the fluctuations in the cost of feed for the horses. The cost of provender was determined chiefly by the weather. Costs could vary between wide margins and as freight rates were evidently fairly sticky, the carriers would need to be able to absorb such shifts, at least in the short run. The conditions of the carrying trade itself, therefore, entailed certain financial requirements of those who engaged in it.

More directly, one of the few positive things known about James Pickford is that he belonged to the yeoman class. He was so called in the letter of administration of his estate

granted to his wife.¹³ Also in a lease of 1747¹⁴ he was entitled 'farmer', which is apparently a late alternative of the same title.¹⁵ The holder of the title of yeoman "had to be a fairly substantial owner (not renter) of land which he had to work himself."¹⁶ Pickford's yeoman status would place him in the same social group as Matthew Pickford the Elder of Adlington, his likely father,¹⁷ who seems from his will to have had quite substantial business interests. It would also mean that when James' son Matthew acquired the title of 'gentleman' he was taking a single, albeit a major, step up the social ladder.¹⁸

Presumably then James Pickford did own some land but no evidence of it has been found. There are various signs, however, that substantial leasehold land was acquired by James, and retained by the family. In 1747, he rented some property in Poynton, under a lease of three lives, from Sir George Warren. The number 'of acres leased is not recorded but the details of the property suggest a sizeable farm.¹⁹ It is possible that James held other land as well. Some years later the Manchester Journal advertised for sale:-

13 Transcription from the original in Cheshire Record Office KS/3/1.

14 CHP/5.

15 P.Laslett The world we have lost (1965) p 43.

16 Ibid.

17 See Appendix 1.

18 See the chart in Laslett Op.cit. p 38.

19 CHP/5.

"A Messuage and Tenement, with 29 acres of land, of large Cheshire measure, in the occupation of Widow Pickford, situate in Pointon aforesaid, adjoining to the Turnpike Road which leads betwixt the Market Towns of Stockport & Macclesfield, and held by a Lease of three lives under Sir George Warrenat a yearly rent of £1.12.0d." 20

The rent stated here is different from that for the land leased in 1747, so this would seem to be an additional sixty acres to that already rented.

There is some evidence, therefore, to indicate that James Pickford was in possession of farmland on a certain scale and, by implication, perhaps commanded more than moderate resources - enough, say, to extend into the carrying trade. There is no evidence that James abandoned farming and indeed his son Matthew, although already referred to as 'carrier', continued an interest in farming and acquired additional farmland in the Poynton area.²¹ It seems that much of the land leased by James, and later Matthew, was pasture or general farmland. This might be explained by an interest in the local staple, dairy farming, but would equally fit with the obvious needs of a road carrying business.²²

20 Manchester Journal 16 Nov. 1771. A Cheshire acre was equivalent to just over two statute acres.

21 Indenture 21 Dec. 1771 by which Matthew Pickford of Poynton, carrier, took over certain property then leased by his mother from Robert Kenyon of Manchester. CHP/1. Indenture 5 Aug. 1774 between Elizabeth Brown of Hurstfield, Cheshire and Matthew Pickford. CHP/3. This agreement explicitly provided for Pickford to plough the land, and to dig marl and clay for use as a dressing.

22 In connection with the supply of food to London, Defoe Complete English tradesman Vol. II pp 258-9 commented on the "many farmers, and others who are not farmers, who keep teams on purpose to let them out" for the carriage of corn, meal and malt.

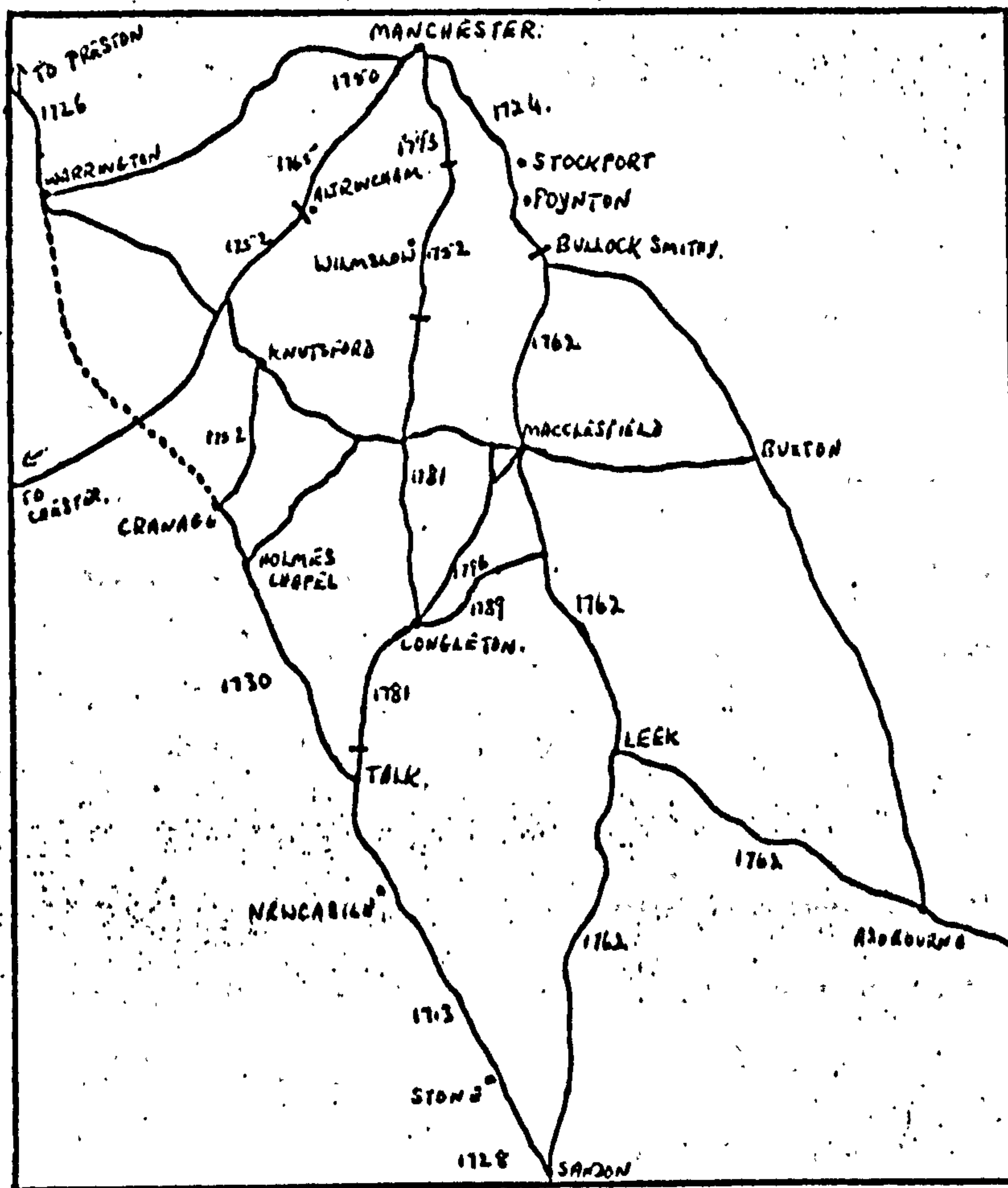
Feed, stabling, smithery and general repair facilities would all be available as part of the farm's stock in trade. A case can therefore be made that James Pickford was well placed to engage in the land carrying trade.

It is possible to deduce some aspects of James Pickford's business and working from the content of his advertisement. His business was the "carriage of goods & passengers, at reasonable rates" the hall-marks of the common carrier. In addition conveyance was clearly by stage waggon: there is no evidence that he ever used anything other than waggon s. As to the regularity of Pickford's services over the whole year, it has already been suggested that it is unlikely the main highways became so bad that all road traffic had to cease, but direct evidence of James Pickford's experience is minimal. Even if James remained primarily concerned with farming, he had a substantial capital sum committed to his road haulage business, too much, it is suggested, to allow of several months' inactivity. It is not without significance, however, that of two joint advertisements of the Manchester carriers, announcing an increase in rates, to which James Pickford was a signatory, one appeared in September and the other in December.²³ Presumably their various waggons were on the road at the time, for the new rates were to apply immediately. Similarly both Martha and Matthew Pickford, in the 1770s, placed advertisements giving notice of alterations in the departure times or journey times of their waggons in November, December and January, as at other times of the year.²⁴

23 Manchester Mercury 24 Sept.1765, 1 Dec. 1767

24 Ibid 26 Nov, 1776, 7 Jan.1777, Manchester Journal 30 Nov, 1771, weekly to 4 Jan.1772, 11 Nov. 1780.

The approach roads from London into Manchester
with the date of their turnpike Acts.



(Source: re-drawn from Harrison Lancashire and
Cheshire Antiquarian Society Vol. IV p. 80)

The route into Manchester followed by Pickford's waggons, as indicated by his advertisement, is of interest. Like other carriers to Lancashire, on leaving London his waggons would follow the ^{Chester.} ~~Highway~~ road through Dunstable, Coventry and Lichfield.²⁵ At Stone, where the Holyhead road turned away westwards toward the Welsh border, the Lancashire carriers continued north for Stoke and Newcastle-under-Lyme. Pickford's waggons left the main road to the north at Talk, in Staffordshire, and approached Manchester by way of Congleton, Macclesfield, Bullock Smithy and Stockport.²⁶ This was the same route as that taken by the waggons jointly operated by Richard Wood, Peter Culshaw and Thomas Norbury, carriers between Manchester and London, in 1739.²⁷ This had long been the regular route into Manchester from the north midlands²⁸ but by Pickford's time an alternative route was available by way of Holmes Chapel, Cranage, Knutsford and Altrincham. Although this was a less direct route into Manchester than that which was actually taken, it was less hilly, had been turnpiked throughout almost its entire length by 1756 and had become the customary route into Manchester from London.²⁹ In addition to this it is notable that at Congleton, where a choice of routes offered, the one which passed through Macclesfield was preferred to that through Wilmslow. Again it is likely that the latter was a less

25 Ogilby (John Owen ed) Britannia depicta or Ogilby Improved (1720) p 50 ff.

26 See accompanying map and James Pickford's advertisement, for the towns listed.

27 Thomas Geographical aspects of the development of transportation p 131.

28 W.B.Stephens (ed) History of Congleton (M.U.P. 1970) p 128.

29 Harrison 'Development of the turnpike system' Lancashire & Cheshire Antiquarian Society Vol. IV, (1886) p 84.

hilly route. Does this mean that greater importance was being attached to factors other than the terrain and the condition of the road?

Two possible explanations may be considered. The first is that both Congleton and Macclesfield might have provided sufficient traffic for that route to retain its attractions. By the mid 1750s the silk industry, both spinning and weaving, had been established in the two towns³⁰ and both the raw material and the finished product would require transportation. However the claims of Congleton were not so strong as to prevent Pickfords' waggons being diverted by way of Leek, another silk town, after the road from Macclesfield had been turnpiked.³¹

The second consideration is that the road from Macclesfield passed through Poynton and this is where the Pickfords almost certainly had their base in the early years. James Pickford moved to Poynton some time after 1747 and the land offered for sale by Martha Pickford in 1771 was precisely "adjoining to the turnpike road" between Stockport and Macclesfield in Poynton.³² The farmland leased by James Pickford could well have provided, as has been suggested already, many of the facilities necessary for a road carrying business and located at Poynton would be well placed to do so. Similarly James himself could combine supervision of his waggons with that of his farming interests.

30 Stephens Op. cit. pp 138-9; C.S.Davies A history of Macclesfield (M.U.P. 1961) p 122 ff

31 see below p 40

32 Manchester Journal 16 Nov. 1771

There is no reason why Poynton should not have been the effective headquarters of the business at this time, and not Manchester. The road between Manchester and Bullock Smithy was one of the earliest to be turnpiked in the Manchester area and the section of the road between Manchester and Stockport, from which town Poynton was only four miles distant, was in particularly good condition.³³ Manchester was easily accessible from Poynton, even for heavy waggons, and it is possible that Pickfords' waggons travelled to and from Manchester in the course of a day in order to discharge and take on goods.³⁴ In this way the business could have been worked without premises in Manchester itself, and there is indeed no sign that the Pickfords had a permanent establishment in Manchester until some years later. When the turnpike from Bullock Smithy through Leek to Ashbourne and Sandon was built in the 1760s and became the primary route between Manchester and London, the advantageous position of Poynton would have been reinforced. Moreover the Pickford family remained closely associated with Poynton for many years to come. The main blocks of land leased by Matthew Pickford were in the Poynton area,³⁵ he had a house there, and at least one notice relative to the

33 Wadsworth and Mann Cotton trade and industrial Lancashire p 220, note 4.

34 On the basis of later departure times and reconstructed working schedules, waggons seem to have left Manchester at 6 p.m. having probably arrived there early the same morning.

35 CHP/1; CHP/5.

carrying business was issued by him as from Poynton.³⁶

To the day of his death, in fact, he was invariably referred to as 'Mr. Pickford' or 'Mat. Pickford of Poynton'.³⁷

Probably not until canal traffic became important did Poynton lose its strategic value and premises in Manchester become necessary.

James Pickford mentioned only the departure days of his two London waggons in his advertisement, presumably because the alteration in the place of departure of one of them was the sole purpose of the announcement. But he must have had waggons operating from Manchester twice a week also. There is no direct evidence how long the journey between Manchester and London took by Pickford's waggon but it is not likely to have differed materially from the time taken by the waggons of another firm of Manchester carriers, John Mills and John Birchenough, as recorded three years later. In June 1759³⁸ Mills & Birchenough operated two waggons a week from Manchester: one waggon left on a Wednesday and arrived in London a week the following Friday, the other left on a Saturday and arrived in London the following Tuesday week. When Sundays are omitted from the calculation, since no travel was allowed that day, a survival from Puritan times, a regular pattern^{of} working is shown. Journeys from Manchester to London took nine days and the return journey one day less. It is possible to reconstruct

36 Manchester Journal 3 July 1773. Matthew's four children were all christened 'in the house at Poynton' KS/2/1(a)

37 This was the usual appellation when his name appeared in the Manchester papers in connection with coaching advertisements.

38 Manchester Mercury 26 June 1759.

from this simple data the working schedule according to which the firm's waggons were operated.³⁹ Two main results are demonstrated; first, that each waggon took three weeks to complete the round trip, and secondly, that a minimum of six waggons were required to work the schedule. The significance of this result is that six waggons were exactly James Pickford's working stock. By implication, therefore, he was following the same basic pattern of working as were Mills & Birchenough.

The schedule demonstrated a simple pattern of working, with regular days of arrival and departure in both Manchester and London. Since the six waggons required as the minimum to operate the schedule were also James Pickford's total stock, any disruptions, on account of breakdown or bad weather conditions, must have thrown the whole time-table out of gear. James Pickford evidently kept no spare capacity and there seems little reserve in the schedule itself. Waggons were turned round at the Manchester end in two days and in one day in London. Provision even for basic maintenance seems slim here. Presumably waggons could be hired in an emergency but other than that the only means of repairing a disruption of the schedule would seem to have depended on shorter than normal turn-round times until the balance was restored. Other operational problems would include the provision of food and rest along the road. Stage waggons were hauled by one team of horses the whole length of the journey, so there was no question of providing relays of horses and stabling facilities. However, both man and beast would need overnight accommodation. Assuming an average

39 See Schedule 1 appended to this chapter.

speed of about two miles per hour, the 186 miles between Manchester and London would take 93 hours, or something in excess of ten hours a day on the road for the nine days of the journey. After their lengthy exertions of the day, the horses would need a feed and a good night's rest just as much as the waggoner.

James Pickford's interest in the carrying trade was, however, nearly very short-lived for within less than twelve months of his advertisement appearing, his business was up for sale.⁴⁰ Why he should want to sell so soon is not known but as others followed his example⁴¹ the answer most likely lies less in anything personal to James Pickford than the general economic climate. For the economy as a whole, the second half of the 1750s appears to have been a time of prosperity. By 1755 depression had given way to recovery of trade, after which the economy moved into boom conditions which reached a peak in 1761.⁴² Despite the onset of war in May 1756, export levels were sustained and then rose sharply from 1759: however imports and re-exports fell off.⁴³ These broad favourable trends, however, were not incompatible with severe food shortages. The summer of 1756 was abnormally wet and bread riots broke out early the following year. Then a succession of good summers led to a substantial improvement for the rest of the decade.⁴⁴ Manchester's experience followed the general trend, in most

40 Manchester Mercury 7 June 1757.

41 A packhorse gang and a broad-wheel waggon business, both operating between Manchester and London, were also advertised for sale. Ibid 26 July, 6 Dec. 1757.

42 T.S. Ashton Economic fluctuations pp 172-3

43 Ibid p 59

44 Ibid pp 20-21.

respects, but the improvements recorded for the country as a whole were absent.⁴⁵ The years 1756-7 were one of the three periods of severe food scarcity in the area in the fifty years from 1715. Trade in 1756 was already bad and when the harvest failed, things soon became so critical that the Justices of the Peace in Lancashire decided to allow the importation of foreign corn. The position deteriorated further in the first part of 1757 and the summer brought only an indifferent harvest. Also, against the trend, the outbreak of war did result in a fall off in trade, at least in the short run. Both factors combined to produce a depressed local economy. James Pickford's decision to sell, apparently taken at the height of this depression, was almost certainly a product of it.

There is nothing on record specific to the carrying business after this episode before James' death, but he does appear on two further occasions acting jointly with his fellow London carriers. Two joint notices were issued in the 1760s⁴⁶ and their content reflects certain features of the carrying trade which are worth noting.

On both occasions the purpose of the carriers' joint notice was to announce an increase in rates on account of a prior increase in operating costs. Two main causes were brought forward, one of which was the cost of buying and feeding the horses. In 1765 the stated reason was "the scarcity of hay and the bad crop of oats and beans", and in 1767 "the long continued high price of almost all the

45 Wadsworth and Mann Op.cit. pp 356-61

46 Manchester Mercury 24 Sept.1765, 1 Dec.1767

necessaries of life." Food riots were common during the years 1766-8 and the economy was generally depressed.⁴⁷ On the latter occasion an "impending danger of loss in our horses" and a possible sharp increase in their cost added further urgency to the situation.⁴⁸ Expenditure of this kind necessarily bulked large in the total costs of road carrying concerns which were therefore particularly sensitive to such price increases. Also as food prices tended to surge suddenly rather than rise smoothly, pressure built up very quickly and could only be off-set, except in the very short run, by increased revenue. At the time feed would certainly be the most volatile element of a road carrier's costs.

The carriers' other reason for the rates increase was "the great advance of toll on the broad-wheel waggons and the reduction of the weight they have heretofore been allowed to carry." In order to promote the use of broad-wheel waggons legislation passed in the 1750s had offered certain concessions, including reduced tolls, to those who used them. Whether as a direct result or not, broad-wheel waggons were widely adopted by carriers and their use was felt to have improved road conditions. These efforts were regarded as so successful that attempts were made to extend them. Under the next scheme wheels were to be so aligned that, on each side of the waggon, the fore and aft wheels would together roll flat^a surface sixteen inches wide. An Act passed in 1765 incorporated these measures and restricted the exemptions previously allowed to waggons

47 Ashton Op.Cit. p 41, p 153, pp 172-3

48 The nature of the threat to the horses is not stated - possibly an outbreak of glanders, a highly infectious disease which could only be combatted by a slaughter policy and was endemic at the time. R.Wallace Farm live-stock of Great Britain (5th ed 1923) p 561

which conformed to the new specifications. In addition a surcharge of 20/- per cent was levied on ordinary broad-wheel waggons carrying loads over six tons. Hence the carriers' action; they preferred to put up their rates rather than ⁹⁰ to the trouble of adapting their waggons to the new stipulations.⁴⁹

A final point of interest which arises from these notices is the relationship between the carriers' charges and the justices' of the peace assessments of carriage rates made under the Act of 1692. It was common, for example, for carriers to approach the justices for relief from rising costs, especially that of provender.⁵⁰ Perhaps no record of the Lancashire justices' assessments has survived,⁵¹ but they were made and the carriers were invited to attend the justices' meeting.⁵² Yet on both occasions under discussion the rates increases, in the months of September and December, seem to have been effected on the carriers' own initiative. Had they the formal authorisation of the justices, why trouble to express the "hope no person will take umbrage" at the increase, or the belief, "that every candid and judicious person...will most readily discover the absolute necessity we are under of making such advance." In both

49 These efforts to promote the 16" rollers do not appear to have been successful. As late as 1774 efforts were still being made to promote them by the remarkable offer of complete exemption from tolls for five years, followed by a further five years of half-tolls. Even on these terms they do not seem to have been adopted.

50 Copland Roads and their traffic pp 69-70; Albert "The justices' rates...reconsidered" Transport History Vol.I p 113 ff. Albert finds a broad correlation between assessments and known carriers' charges. It would be interesting to discover which of the two led the price movements.

51 Lancashire is not included in Albert's list of counties from which returns were made Op.cit. p 126 ff

52 Manchester Mercury 7 April 1767; also 21 March 1797

cases the new rates were to apply immediately; the carriers apparently could not afford to wait until the justices' next meeting, the following Spring.

James Pickford died in May 1768, and the business was carried on for a short time in the name of his widow, Martha. Although this might seem an unusual role for a woman, there are in fact many instances in the carrying and coaching trades of women, especially widows, so acting in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁵³ However Martha Pickford did not survive her husband for very long, but before her own death few discernable changes had taken place in the running of the business. An advertisement of November 1771⁵⁴ showed the same twice weekly departures, but a point of interest is that Martha Pickford referred to herself as "London, Manchester, Stockport, Macclesfield & Leek Carrier." The turnpike road from Bullock Smithy through Macclesfield and Leek was now evidently the route used by Pickfords' waggons. The only change which might rate as a positive advance was a certain degree of nationalisation in London. The use of two different inns in London had apparently been the cause of confusion, with customers going to the wrong inn to collect their goods. Things were changed so that for the future all the waggons were worked from the White Bear in Basinghall Street.

53 For carrying, see Register of Freedoms, 1742-1797, Fellowship of Carmen, Guildhall Library, GL.MS. 4915/2; Manchester Mercury, 10 Sept. 1765 shows Catherine Mills taking over from her husband (of Mills and Birchenough.) For coaching, see S.Harris The coaching age (1885), p 156, p 162

54 Manchester Journal 30 Nov 1771

The death of Martha Pickford in May 1772 ended the first phase of Pickfords' development. The business had survived and been consolidated. After her death control passed to her eldest son, Matthew. With him came expansion and diversification.

Matthew Pickford was thirty-two years of age when he took control of the family enterprise. Matthew had already been working in the business before his father died⁵⁵ and Martha Pickford had cause to acknowledge in her will "the aid and service he has afforded in and about the said business."⁵⁶ It is likely that Matthew acquired practical experience on the road, by travelling with the waggons. This is suggested by his marriage, probably in 1775 or 6, to Hannah Taylor of Talk O' the Hill. Talk was the road junction where the waggons had formerly turned off the main highway to the north for Congleton and was no doubt a suitable overnight stopping place. Matthew's wedding was attended by Joseph Hulse and Jonathan Higginson, both carriers by waggon between Manchester and London.⁵⁷

In the first Manchester directory(1772) the family business was already entered under Matthew Pickford's name.⁵⁸

55 J.P.Earwaker (ed) The Constables' accounts of the manor of Manchester, Vol. III 1743-1776 (1892) p 176: 16 Feb. 1768 "to Matthew Pickford carrying Water Buckets from London, £1.3.4d."

56 Transcript of Martha Pickford's will KS/3/1; also Pic 4/20

57 Matthew's first child, James, was born 14 Dec. 1776. The date of his marriage is not known. A paper at KS/2/1(a) which records the marriage and the christening of their children includes the note 'Mr and Mrs Pickford and Miss Sarah Taylor arrived at Poynton July 28 - 1776.' Jonathan Higginson, who was sponsor to Matthew's elder surviving son Thomas, married Matthew's sister, Elizabeth.

58 The Manchester directory, 1772 (Raffald; reprinted 1889) p 55.

Six firms then operated between Manchester and London; four had waggons departing twice a week, the other two once a week. The four carrying firms with a twice weekly service, Pickfords and three others,⁵⁹ were all presumably of the same size, yet Pickfords was placed at the head of the list, and the others in alphabetical order. James Pickford had earlier headed the list of signatories to the joint notices discussed earlier, so perhaps the Pickfords had already achieved a certain primacy among their colleagues in the trade. The stage waggoner's traditional custom of both passengers and goods remained; until at least 1781 Matthew Pickford was concerned with this kind of traffic.⁶⁰ The only change made, and that almost immediately, was the removal by Matthew of his London base from the White Bear in Basinghall Street to the Swan with Two Necks, in Lad Lane.⁶¹ The Swan remained as Pickfords' London headquarters for the next twenty odd years.

There were two chief developments which affected road haulage in the course of the next few years - faster speeds and the provision of more frequent services. The introduction of faster speeds in May 1776 was foreshadowed when a new firm of carriers, Swaine & Co. & Frith & Co. reduced the time to London from nine to eight days.⁶² By November the first mention was made of 'flying waggons' - a somewhat picturesque description of these lumbering vehicles no matter how much they were speeded up. Swaine & Co. now

59 Cooper & Co., Hulse & Co., Wood & Co.

60 Manchester Journal, 24 Feb. 1781

61 Ibid 3 July 1773; Manchester Mercury 6 July 1773

62 Manchester Mercury 21 May 1776

advertised a journey time of six days⁶³ but had already been countered by Pickfords and Cooper & Co. both of whom claimed to cover the distance in four and a half days.⁶⁴ Within a matter of months, therefore, journey times had been halved. Exactly why this sudden increase in speeds occurred is not easily explained. No doubt competition played a part, but it is significant that this development was not confined to road haulage. Coach times between Manchester and London were reduced from three to two days at approximately the same period. The explanation would probably lie in the cumulative impact of prior road improvements whose potential had previously gone unappreciated but was now being exploited.⁶⁵

The implications of these faster speeds are shown when a working schedule is constructed on the basis of the waggons' journey times. Swaine & Co, for example, was soon advertising a five day journey time to London.⁶⁶ The working schedule is complex and shows a relatively inefficient use of the waggons. At least five waggons were required to work this service but their turn-round time in Manchester was particularly slow. Waggons were turned round in thirty hours in London, but only fifty-six hours (excluding Sundays) in Manchester.

63 Ibid 19 Nov. 1776.

64 Cooper & Co. Ibid 19 Nov. 1776; Pickfords, Ibid 26 Nov. 1776. Pickfords' notice is dated 16 Nov. 1776.

65 A point of interest is that this speeding up occurs in November and January, the bad season for road transport.

66 Manchester Mercury 7 Jan. 1777. According to this notice Swaine & Co. had a new partner in London, John Jones & Co. Possibly this was James Pickford's former book-keeper in London, having set up in business on his own account. This would be an obvious means of entry to the trade and seems to have been used by James Deykin. Deykin was book-keeper in London to Bass & Morris in 1781 and was in business on his own account in 1799.

By comparison, Pickfords and Cooper & Co.'s services, on the basis of a four and a half day journey time, were on a much better footing altogether. Waggon were turned round in thirty hours in both London and Manchester, and the round trip was completed in two weeks. Moreover the reconstructed schedule demonstrates that only four waggons were needed to operate it.⁶⁷ In terms of waggon requirements alone, Pickfords and Cooper & Co. enjoyed a certain advantage over Swaine & Co.

The changes in speeds and schedules which took place resulted, as a bye-product, in conditions which contained built-in opportunities for expansion. Since four waggons were now sufficient to provide a twice weekly service between Manchester and London, firms which owned six waggons, like Pickfords and probably also Cooper & Co. and Hulse & Co. came to enjoy a certain margin of spare capacity. There was always the possibility of sticking to the existing twice weekly service and scrapping the extra two waggons or keeping them as reserve stock. Alternatively they could be kept at work by increasing the number of services to three a week. Considerable gains were possible for both carrier and customer. A net increase of a third in the leading carriers' provision of transport facilities could not help but benefit merchants and manufacturers sending goods to the London market. As for the carriers, within the space of a few weeks, their capital was rendered more productive. The earning power of their existing stock was increased by a

67 See Schedules 2 and 3 appended to this chapter.

third, possibly with a less than a proportional increase in variable costs. Provided the overall volume of traffic rose sufficiently to keep constant or even reduce unit costs then the potential net profitability of the business would be enhanced. Given these considerations it comes as no surprise to find both Cooper & Co. and Hulse & Co. exploiting their position and advertising three departures a week before the year was out.⁶⁸ There is no direct evidence, but it is unlikely that Matthew Pickford failed to follow suit.

During the succeeding years, services became more numerous with only limited, if any, further reductions in journey times. The four-and-a-half day journey was dropped and replaced, from the early 1780s, by a basic five day journey, together with more frequent services. However it is possible that by the end of the eighteenth century the time of the journey between Manchester and London had been lowered to four days.⁶⁹ Faster speeds awaited some form of technical breakthrough in the design of road vehicles. The frequency of the road carriers' services however, steadily advanced, involving regular increases in the amount of capital employed. The initial phase of expansion can be explained in part by changes on the supply side of road transport. The faster speeds which were attained created conditions favourable to growth, but for these to be translated into practical results an increase in demand for

68 Manchester Mercury, 16 Sept, 30 Dec.1777.

69 Ibid 14 Feb.1797. A new firm of carriers, Thomas Sleath & Co., advertised to this effect but went out of business the following year.

transport services was also necessary. Extra services required extra traffic to support them. Additional services beyond those made possible by improved use of existing stock would be regarded as a response to a sustained increase in demand. The years after 1780 are customarily taken as the spring board of Britain's industrial growth, and even if there is statistical evidence for a starting point in the 1740s⁷⁰ the strong, by and large sustained⁷¹ advance of the economy during the latter period is not questioned. For Lancashire and Manchester in particular, the years following the conclusion of the American war brought rapid industrial development. Aikin recorded a "vast extension of the Manchester manufactures after the peace of 1783"⁷² and, in more general terms, all the statistical series of the cotton trade begin their sharp upward movement.⁷³ Transport services of all kinds were stimulated by the growth of Manchester's trade - canals in particular, but road haulage also.

London gave way to Liverpool as the major port of entry for raw cotton, but it remained the most important market for the manufacturers of cotton.⁷⁴ The Manchester and London carriers, therefore, were almost certainly finding

70 P.Deane and W.A.Cole British economic growth 1688-1959 (C.U.P. 1964) pp 40-62.

71 Ashton Economic fluctuations pp 172-3, and passim would suggest fewer depression years in the latter part of the century.

72 J.Aikin A description of the country..round Manchester (1795) p 129.

73 Deane & Cole British economic growth p 182 ff

74 M.M.Edwards The growth of the British cotton trade 1780-1815 (M.U.P. 1967) Chap. 8.

themselves required to transport increasing volumes of goods. In the circumstances it became necessary, and presumably profitable, to expand services still further, but henceforward by additions to their capital stock. By the end of 1780 both Pickfords and Cooper & Co. were sending out waggons four times a week.⁷⁵ On the basis of a five day journey, and reconstructing the working schedule as before, this can be shown to require a minimum of eight waggons. For Pickfords at least this may have represented the first net addition to the firm's capital stock since the very beginnings of the business.

Once under way, however, expansion continued at a steady rate. By 1788,^{when} a new directory was published, Pickfords' services had been further increased to six departures a week.⁷⁶ This was more than any of the other London road carriers offered and, in view of the continuing ban on Sunday travel, was equivalent to a daily service. At the end of the century Pickfords' waggons still set off daily but it is likely that they were now completing the journey in four days. Given speedy turn-round times a daily service on this basis could have been worked with a minimum of ten waggons, but it is likely twelve were used.⁷⁷ Over the years, Matthew Pickford was making steady progress in the development of the business.

75 Manchester Mercury 14, 21 Nov. 1780; also Manchester directory 1781 (Raffald) pp 91-2.

76 Directory for Manchester & Salford 1788 (Lewis) p 41ff.

77 The use of ten waggons would have required very tight turn-round times and also staggered starting days for each waggon. With twelve waggons this pressure would be relaxed and each waggon could depart on the same day each week.

Changes other than the speeds and frequency of services also took place. A new route to London was adopted. Martha Pickford had already transferred to the new turnpike road through Macclesfield to Leek but the road taken beyond there was not indicated. Within a few years of taking over, Matthew Pickford was directing his waggons through Ashbourne and Derbyshire instead of Sandon and Staffordshire; the old established carriers' route through Lichfield and Coventry was abandoned in favour of one taking in Derby, Leicester and Northampton.⁷⁸

There was also a more important break with the past. During the 1780s Matthew Pickford began to sever the carriers' traditional links with the coaching inns and, by taking up more specialised premises, became more heavily committed both in Manchester and London. Initially this probably reflected a quantitative increase in the volume of traffic being handled but from the late 1780s and early 1790s and important additional stimulus would come from the need to cater for a new range of traffic, that going by canal.

Since at least 1772,⁷⁹ Matthew Pickford operated from the Swan Inn, Market Street, in Manchester, but whether he rented any warehouse space is unknown; from the previous discussion concerning the likely role of Poynton, the guess would be that he did not.⁸⁰ In 1781 he still used the Swan

78 Manchester directory 1781 (Raffald) p 92.

79 For this and succeeding dates to 1794, see the appropriate Manchester trade directories.

80 Manchester Mercury 30 Nov. 1779, carried a warning from the Borough-reeve and Constables that the carriers must stop loading and unloading their waggons in the public street.

Inn, but in 1788 reference is first made to a warehouse in Market Street but no mention made of the Swan Inn. By 1794 new warehouse premises had been taken at 54 Fountain Street, and probably also a small depot at Castle Quay for goods passing over the Duke of Bridgewater's canal.⁸¹ At the same time a move was made in London also. The Swan with Two Necks had served for many years as Pickfords' London terminal but in 1794 the lease of the Castle Inn next door to the Swan fell vacant and it was promptly acquired by Matthew Pickford's brother Thomas.⁸² The volume of business handled by the firm in London had evidently reached the stage where accommodation shared jointly with other carriers was no longer adequate. It is indeed likely that Pickfords had had sole use of the Swan for some years prior to the transfer to the Castle,⁸³ but apparently it was preferable to acquire the tenancy of a property in addition to its exclusive use. As a coaching inn the Castle would possess stabling, storage space and room for offices. Over the years the property was rebuilt to meet the needs of a carrying business, and the lease retained until 1918.

Pickfords' services from London can be identified for the first time only in 1789.⁸⁴ In that year the Blossoms Inn, Lawrence lane, and the Saracen's Head, Snowhill, were being

81 V.I.Tomlinson 'Early warehouses on Manchester waterways', Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society Vol. 71 (1961) pp 145-6.

82 E.Halfpenny - 'Pickfords': expansion and crisis in the early nineteenth century.' Business History Vol. 1, (1959) p 117. Thomas Pickford also acquired a Freedom of the Innholders' Company, 3 March 1798, London Guildhall, G.L.MS6651/1, Innholders' Company, Freedom admissions 1673-1820 p 188.

83 The universal British directory of trade and commerce 1790 Vol. 1 p 506, records Pickfords' as the only waggon services worked from the Swan. Pickfords was not included with the carriers working from the Castle p 482.

84 Lowndes London directory, 1789 Guide to stage coaches waggons, etc. p 99.

used as well as the Swan. From fuller information recorded the following year,⁸⁵ two or possibly three road services were being worked from London. Waggon left daily from the Swan for Derby and Manchester, the regular service already established from the evidence of the Manchester trade directories and newspapers. A general service through Derbyshire and Cheshire to Manchester was also listed in Pickfords' name from the Blossoms Inn, Lawrence lane. Whether these waggons, which left four days a week, were additional to those from the Swan cannot be said. Also waggons departed three times a week from the Swan for the silk towns of Macclesfield, Leek and Stockport. If, as seems the case, they were additional to the regular waggons to Manchester this would require an upward revision of Matthew Pickford's estimated capital needs at this date. During the 1790s road haulage and canal carriage were combined into a joint service as traffic was dispatched part way to London by canal from Manchester and the rest of the way by land.⁸⁶ However, despite the advances made by canal carriage, road haulage retained its place. Evidence for 1799,⁸⁷ the year of Matthew Pickford's death, would suggest that traffic which could be sent by canal was being so dispatched and that the fly waggon service, other than the regular daily waggon to Manchester, was being directed towards areas not yet served by canals. In addition to

85 The Universal British directory 1790, Vol 1, p 479, p 506.

86 See Chap. 3, Section 2.

87 W. Holden Holden's new, easy and complete reference (sic) to all.... stage coaches, mails....waggons... barges (1799) p 63 and p 96.

the Manchester service, which probably also catered for places like Leek and Macclesfield which lacked canal transport, there was one to Ashbourne, Buxton and Derby with connections to adjacent towns. The opening of the Derby canal in 1796 linked the town to the Trent & Mersey canal and thus the national network, but even so London traffic would have faced a circuitous journey. Road haulage still had something to offer Derby and was essential for Ashbourne and Buxton and similar land-locked parts of Derbyshire. By the end of this period long distance waggon traffic, other than that worked in with the canals, was perhaps a relatively declining proportion of Pickfords' total business. In absolute terms, however, there must have been considerable expansion in this line of business and a significant increase in the amount of capital invested in road vehicles, horses and all their related equipment.

The expansion of Pickfords' road haulage business, which has now been outlined, has a number of important implications. Pickfords alone, of several long distance carrying firms in Manchester, more than doubled its provision of road haulage services between Manchester and London and introduced additional ones to other places in the decade or so from 1776. The experience of other carriers was no doubt the same both in Manchester and other parts of the country. This was at a time when, if the account of the standard text-books is to be accepted, road transport was of relatively small economic significance especially compared with water transport and canal transport in particular. Mantoux, emphasised the deficiencies of the roads, despite turnpiking, as expressed in the high

cost of goods traffic, and high mail prices.⁸⁸ Several writers since have expressed more or less the same view.⁸⁹ Jackman, although recognising the great growth of road carrying which occurred in these years, devoted to it less than one-fifteenth of his discussion concerning road improvements and their effects during the years 1750 to 1830. In contrast the development of coaching and related topics received almost four times as much attention.⁹⁰ Miss Deane also, of more recent writers, stresses the limitations of even improved road transport. "If Britain had had to depend on her roads to carry her heavy goods traffic the effective impact of the industrial revolution might well have been delayed until the railway age." The absence of any such lag was explained by the emergence of canals and river navigations to provide the necessary "reliable, high-capacity, low-cost transport system."⁹¹ It would, of course, be totally unrealistic to suggest that road transport could in any way match the canals' ability, in terms of physical capacity and cost, to deal with the bulky raw materials such as coal and metal ores which were so important in the process

88 P. Mantoux. The Industrial Revolution p 119, p 123.

89 C.Wilson England's apprenticeship 1603-1763 (1965) dismisses roads briefly (pp43-4); even turnpikes are regarded as having only "nibbled at the problem of road conditions", so that "progress was fractional" (p 278). G.N.Clark The wealth of England (H.U.L. 1959) while believing that "by 1760 many of the roads had decidedly improved" (p 139) also thought that because of the expense and difficulties of organisation by road, water transport was the only option open to long distance heavy traffic. Compare also T.S.Ashton The Industrial Revolution 1760-1830 (H.U.L. 1961) p 44, pp 84-5; A.Briggs The age of improvement 1783-1867 (1960) p 30; A.Redford The economic history of England 1760-1860 (2nd ed 1960) pp 12-16.

90 Jackman Transportation in modern England, Chap.4.

91 P.Deane The first Industrial Revolution (C.U.P. 1965) pp 73-4.

of industrialisation. Nonetheless road transport possessed an importance throughout the eighteenth century which has been underestimated.

There would be no dispute that "throughout the eighteenth century the chief highway of the English was the sea."⁹² The coasting trade certainly made an extremely important, for one author⁹³ the crucial, contribution to the creation of a national economy from the seventeenth century onwards, but it is noticeable that the historian of the coasting trade⁹⁴ is at pains not to overstate its individual significance. The "close interconnection between land and water transport" is emphasised from the beginning; land, river and sea transport were used as connected links.⁹⁵ Moreover the transport improvements of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, part product, part stimulus of the changes taking place in the production and marketing of agricultural and manufactured goods, were not restricted to water transport: "A careful reading of Defoe, for example, suggests that much work was done on the roads before the engineers got busy and before the turnpike system was fully developed." However it remains true that "the coasting trade remained throughout this period the easiest and cheapest form of inland transport."⁹⁶

Although land carriage was costly during the eighteenth century, yet it was far from being of negligible importance.

92 T.S.Ashton An economic history of England: the 18th century (1955) p 70.

93 Deane, Op.cit. p 74

94 T.S.Willan The English coasting trade 1600-1750 (M.U.P.1938)

95 Ibid p xi.

96 Ibid p 189, p xii

At least a minimum efficiency of road haulage was necessary to offset some of the damage caused by the frequent wars of this notoriously bellicose century. Disruption in the coasting trade was caused not only by enemy privateering but even more by the activities of the press gang. According to one writer, in the late seventeenth century impressment, even the threat of it from the moment war was declared, "caused a far greater interruption to commerce than all the other hazards of war put together."⁹⁷ The declaration of war immediately put a premium on the supply of road transport services. The heavy stream of commodities of all kinds to the London market resulted in return freight rates often falling very low. Accordingly "it seems safe to include the road hauliers in any list of those who benefitted from war."⁹⁸

The road carriers, however, and road haulage in general, had a consequence quite apart from any windfall gains of war. The contribution of road transport has attracted little significant attention⁹⁹ but one of the few, Defoe, to pass any comment had no doubt of its importance.

"The carriage of goods in England...is chiefly managed by horses and waggons; the number of which is not to be guessed at, and is equal, in my opinion, to the whole trade of some nations....In a word, our river navigation is not

97 M.W.Flinn Men of iron. The Crowleys in the early iron industry (Edinburgh U.P. 1962) pp 132-3.

98 Ashton Economic fluctuations p 81 and the references there cited. See also Albert Op.cit. p 107 for the correlation between war years and legislation concerning road carriage.

99 Willan 'Justices of the peace and the rates of land carriage' Journal of Transport History Vol. V. p 197

to be named for carriage, with the vast bulk of carriage by packhorse, and by waggons..."¹⁰⁰

The power of Arthur Young's strictures on the condition of several stretches of road on which he travelled is one good reason why the contribution of road transport has been overlooked. Subsequent writers have tended to generalise from Young's worst experiences and concluded that even the turnpike roads were in no condition to support a significant volume of traffic. A closer analysis of Young's comments, however, demonstrated that his witness was not solely for the prosecution. Indeed on his northern tour, the best documented for this purpose, Young commented unfavourably on less than two-fifths of the roads over which he travelled.¹⁰¹ Young, therefore, does not necessarily stand apart from his near contemporaries who affirmed improving road conditions and an increasing volume of traffic passing over them.¹⁰²

In the last few years road transport has begun to be accorded a more positive role in eighteenth century economic development. Professor Flinn has suggested that by mid-century Britain's roads were quite regularly carrying even fairly heavy loads of industrial traffic, the haulage costs

100 Defoe Complete English tradesman Vol. i, pp 339-41.

101 E.F.Gay 'Arthur Young on English roads' Quarterly Journal of Economics Vol xli (1926/7) p 545

102 Dyos & Aldcroft British transport p 69 ff; P.Mathias The first industrial nation (1969) p 114

of which did not constitute an undue proportion of final costs.¹⁰³ There is earlier evidence which would support at least the first part of this suggestion. Industrial expansion in parts of the West Riding, for example, took place on a road transport base, although the roads cracked under the strain. The repair of roads from Selby to Leeds, Bradford and Halifax, and from Elland to Leeds became necessary because they had been "torn in pieces by the heavy carriages passing to and fro in the carrying on the vast extended trade of those parts."¹⁰⁴ In the case of Congleton "industrial development in the form of silk mills began before roads were turnpiked or canals...built."¹⁰⁵

A more telling point made by Flinn is that a number of towns, among them Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield and Leeds, experienced considerable industrial and urban growth at a time when water transport was of relatively small importance.¹⁰⁶ The growth experienced might have been only very moderate compared with what was to come later, but for that time was substantial. The population of Manchester and Salford was estimated, in round numbers, at 8,000 persons in 1717 and 20,000 persons in 1757. Population more than doubled during the intervening four decades.¹⁰⁷ During the same period Manchester experienced considerable industrial as well as town growth. In a well known passage describing the growth of Manchester's trade, Aikin pointed precisely to road improvements as the causal explanation.

103 M.W.Flinn Origins of the Industrial Revolution p 96.

104 Defoe Tour through the whole island Vol. iii, p 154.

105 Stephens Op.cit. p 137.

106 Flinn Op.cit. p 96.

107 Aikin Description of the country...round Manchester p 156.

In the early days the functions of manufacture, sales and distribution were all performed by the merchant himself as he travelled the country seeking retail outlets, and orders and raw materials for the next cycle of production.

"On the improvement of turnpike roads waggons were set up, and the packhorses discontinued; and the chapmen only rode out for orders, carrying with them patterns in their bags. It was during the forty years from 1730 to 1770 that trade was greatly pushed by the practice of sending these riders all over the kingdom, to those towns which before had been supplied from the wholesale dealers in the capital places before mentioned." 108

Although the Mersey-Irwell Navigation had allowed river communication between Manchester and Liverpool since 1720, for Aikin the key to growth in what were clearly regarded as crucial years was found in better roads and better haulage facilities.

So far the argument has proceeded by way of particular examples. However, it is possible to advance on a broader base by reference to the published work of a Japanese scholar Akio Akochi.¹⁰⁹ This study analyses the structure of the internal market of the English economy in the eighteenth century from several points of view, including that of road communications. Akochi's work is based on a study of contemporary writers like Defoe, detailed analyses of many hundreds of petitions for road improvements to the House of Commons during the years 1700-1750, reports of select committees and other official papers. The main

108 Aikin Op.cit. p 183.

109 A. Akochi - A study of modern English economic history: the internal market (Tokyo 1963) I must thank Professor Flinn for lending me a copy of this book and particularly my colleague Dr. Mark Elvin who kindly translated the relevant section for me.

conclusion drawn from this evidence is that road transport had an important function in breaking down the strictures of 'localism' and the emergence of a much wider, integrated home market. The break-through was achieved, it is argued, during the years 1710 to 1730 as agricultural produce, manufactures and merchandise of all kinds became increasingly more mobile.¹¹⁰ Not only short-haul traffic is involved; the carriage of goods by road over quite long distances, for example London to the Midlands, and including through traffic to the North, constitutes an important part of the argument.¹¹¹

Under the pressure of a growing volume of traffic the road surfaces, inadequately maintained at the best of times, began to break up. The threat to incomes which had become dependent on the new forms of marketing and production was the spur to road improvement. A typical petition, lodged in 1726 asserted that "Formerly... the people of Birmingham, who are numerous and have flourishing industries, enjoyed the convenience of swift roads to transport their products to London or Westminster; but because the roads have become bad, they have now lost this convenience."¹¹²

The climax of petitions, coming in the 1720s and after, coincides precisely with the years in which the decisive extension of market relationships is found to have occurred. On this analysis therefore, complaints about poor road conditions in the early eighteenth century take on a distinct and positive economic significance. "At this time, the decay of the roads does not indicate the localised nature

110 Ibid p 38

111 Ibid p 47.

112 Ibid p 42 quoting the Journal of the House of Commons.

of market relationships, but precisely the reverse, and demonstrates the development of the markets for industry which relied upon the intermediary services of these roads."¹¹³ This is a challenging conclusion and needs to be examined further. At least a prima facie case has been made that road transport was an integral component of the first phase of industrial expansion.

As far as the creation of a truly national economy is concerned the overwhelming dominance attributed to the coasting trade as the critical formative element has at least been questioned. Perhaps London depended on it more than the rest of the country. However a direct confrontation of rival claims need not be at issue. Dr. Willan emphasised the degree of market expansion during this period and the essential contribution made to it by the coasting trade, but he also insisted on the degree of complementarity which pertained between road, river and sea.¹¹⁴ Within that framework the full effectiveness of improved coastal shipping and related facilities would necessarily depend on similar advances in the other links of the chain.

Perhaps a proper balance would place more emphasis on this notion of complementarity. It is misleading to suggest that one line of development, e.g. roads, was tried and then abandoned as deficient in favour of an alternative, more promising prospect, e.g. rivers or canals.¹¹⁵ The degree of competition between the various forms of transport

113 Ibid p 53. Westerfield Middlemen in English business p 368 sees transport as "the basal and causal element in the expansion of business before 1760."

114 Willan The English coasting trade p 189; p xi.

115 E. Lipson The growth of English society (4th ed. 1959) p 231 "The universal discontent with the condition of the roads inspired attempts to utilise as much as possible an alternative method of transport, namely, the rivers."

may not have been very great. Rather a sustained increase in aggregate demand from industry and agriculture stimulated improved facilities in all modes of transport. What is seen in the eighteenth century, therefore, is an advance on a broad front, a single process which found different forms of expression at different times, first in roads and rivers together¹¹⁶ and then in canals.

It is impossible to assess the significance of road transport in the eighteenth century in anything more than crude terms. A certain test of the land carriers' efficiency is provided by the published studies of three business concerns of the period, of which Pickfords had dealings with two. In no case does the firms' experience suggest that inadequate or inefficient transport services hampered their business dealings. Samuel Oldknow used Pickfords quite extensively for transporting his muslins to his London warehousemen, S.&W.Salte. The published Salte-Oldknow correspondence¹¹⁷ for the years 1786-8 show that Oldknow's consignments were delivered in London with regularity. There were no complaints. The historian of Peter Stubbs of Warrington also testifies, for a slightly later date, to the efficiency of the inland carriers.¹¹⁸ Pickfords was one of several carriers employed by Stubbs and appears to have been the largest, operating over a wide area by land and water. Similarly Abraham Dent of Kirkby Stephen, although

116 Akochi Op.cit. p 53; during the years 1700 to 1750, there were some 700 petitions to the Commons for road improvements, and about 500 for rivers (p 56).

117 Unwin Samuel Oldknow and the Arkwrights Chaps. iv and v.

118 T.S.Ashton - An eighteenth century industrialist. Peter Stubbs of Warrington 1756-1806 (1939; reprint 1961, M.U.P.) Chap.7.

relying heavily on road transport, was able to operate in a national market without difficulty.¹¹⁹

A part of Stubbs' success was attributed to his favourable location at Warrington, a junction of north-south and east-west communications, an ideal position from which to exploit both land and water transport. Superior transport facilities have been brought forward as an important factor which determined the location of the silk throwing industry in north-east Cheshire in the later eighteenth century.¹²⁰ The major markets for thrown silk were in Coventry and London, and those areas prospered which were most favourably endowed with good road connections. The turnpike from Manchester through Macclesfield, Leek and Ashbourne to Derby, opened in the late 1760s, was less hilly than existing roads and soon attracted most traffic. Because of this, it has been argued, silk-throwing migrated to towns on or close to this new line, especially to the towns of Macclesfield, Leek and Congleton. Pickfords' waggon services are supposed to have had a hand in this development but their precise contribution is not made very clear.

Road transport undoubtedly contributed less to Britain's economic development than the canals, but the latter's dominance can be emphasised at too early a date. This

119 T.S.Willan An eighteenth century shopkeeper p 109 ff.

120 C.L.Mellowes The geographical basis of the natural silk industry of the west Pennines. (London University M.A. Thesis, 1933) p 29 ff. In a notice in The Derby Mercury 4 March 1802, Pickfords explicitly limited its liability in respect of silk, silk hose or lace over £20 conveyed by road to London from Derby.

applies especially to the creation of a national network of canals. Many canals, e.g. the Loughborough Navigation, were essentially local promotions and their success in no way depended on their being linked to a network of routes. However one of the basic stimuli to canal construction was the establishment of direct water links between Liverpool, Hull, Bristol and London. Some parts of this system, notably ^{the} Trent & Mersey and Staffordshire & Worcester canals, were completed in the 1770s, but others, especially the Coventry and Oxford canals, although authorised at the same time, were not finished for more than another decade. Not until 1790 was the 'Cross' complete and long distance as well as local traffic begin to flow over the southern half of the network. The gains to the Coventry canal company in particular were marked by a substantial increase in the level of dividends.¹²¹

As far as merchandise traffic to London is concerned, in which Pickfords and most other long distance carriers specialised, the canals' contribution may have been delayed even later.¹²² Entry to London was by the circuitous Oxford canal and Thames navigation route, both parts of which left much to be desired. Indeed within a few months of the 'Cross' being completed, a more satisfactory route into London, the Grand Junction canal, was being projected. Not until 1800 was London directly linked to the canal network: in the meantime the need for road transport remained.

121 C. Hadfield The canals of the east midlands (Newton Abbot 1966) p 143.

122 Canal transport is discussed more extensively in the second part of chapter 3.

This is illustrated by Pickfords' experience. Although canal transport was soon adopted, waggons continued to be used for a substantial part of the distance to London throughout the 1790s. There is no reason why Pickfords' experience should have been untypical.¹²³

The close correlation between canal construction and the exploitation of mineral resources is familiar enough. In addition canals such as the Trent & Mersey and the Staffordshire & Worcester soon attracted the bulk of general traffic, including merchandise, in the areas which they served. The regional impact of canals was, from an early date, very great. But as far as London-bound traffic was concerned, road transport retained a role of some consequence until the end of the eighteenth century.

123 According to the London trade directories of the period most of the carriers to Manchester used only road transport.

Schedule I.

Time-table of Waggons

(from Mills & Birchenough advertisement, Manchester Mercury 26 June 1759)

Data

Dep.	Manchester	Sat.	Arr	London	Tue	11 days	inc	2	Sun	= 9 days	travel
"	London	Wed	"	Manchester	Thur	= 9	"	1	"	= 8	"
"	Manchester	Wed	"	London	Fri	= 10	"	1	"	= 9	"
"	London	Sat	"	Manchester	Mon	= 10	"	2	"	= 8	"

Reconstruction

<u>Sun</u>	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tue</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thur</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>
			A dep Lon			B dep Lon
			C dep Man			D dep Man

<u>Sun</u>	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tue</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thur</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>
			E dep Lon	A arr Man	C arr Lon	A dep Man
			F dep Man			C dep Lon

<u>Sun</u>	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tue</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thur</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>
	B arr Man	D arr Lon	B dep Man	E arr Man	F arr Lon	E dep Man
			B dep Lon			F dep Lon

<u>Sun</u>	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tue</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thur</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>
	C arr Man	A arr Lon	A dep Lon	D arr Man	B arr Lon	B dep Lon
			C dep Man			D dep Man

Schedule II

Swaine & Co. and Jones & Co.

Manchester Mercury, 7 Jan 1777

Depart Manchester Mon & Thurs

Length of Journey = 5 days

Depart London Tues & Fri

<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tue</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thur</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>
Waggon A dep Man 6pm.	C dep Lon 4pm.	B dep Man 6pm.	D dep Lon 4pm.		

<u>Sun</u>	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tue</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thur</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>
	E dep Man 6pm.	A dep Lon 4pm.	C dep Man 6pm.	B dep Lon 4pm.		
	A arr Lon 10am.	C arr Man 10am.	B arr Lon 10am.	D arr Man 10am.		

<u>Sun</u>	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tue</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thur</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>
	D dep Man 6pm.	E dep Lon 4pm.	A dep Man 6pm.	C dep Lon 4pm.		
	E arr Lon 10am.	A arr Man 10am.	C arr Lon 10am.	B arr Man 10am.		

<u>Sun</u>	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tue</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thur</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>
	B dep Man 6pm.	D dep Lon 4pm.	E dep Man 6pm.	A dep Lon 4pm.		
	D arr Lon 10am.	E arr Man 10am.	A arr Lon 10am.	C arr Man 10am.		

Schedule III

Cooper & Co. and Pickfords

Manchester Mercury, 7 Jan 1777

Depart Manchester Wed & Sat Length of Journey = $4\frac{1}{2}$ days
 Depart London Wed & Sat

<u>Sun</u>	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tue</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thur</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>
			A dep Man 6pm.			B dep Man 6pm
			C dep Lon 6pm.			D dep Lon 6pm

<u>Sun</u>	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tue</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thur</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>
	A arr Lon 12.00		A dep Lon 6pm.		B arr Lon 12.00	B dep Lon 6pm
	C arr Man 12.00		C dep Man 6pm.		D arr Man 12.00	D dep Man 6pm

<u>Sun</u>	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tue</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thur</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>
		A arr Man 12.00	A dep Man 6pm.		B arr Man 12.00	B dep Man 6pm
		C arr Lon 12.00	C dep Lon 6pm.		D arr Lon 12.00	D dep Lon 6pm

CHAPTER 3

DIVERSIFICATION: THE COACHING AND CANAL TRADES

The expansion of Pickfords' road haulage interests was accompanied by diversification into two other lines of activity, the coaching and the canal trades. The adoption of canal working was of major importance as it had a profound and permanent effect on the pattern of Pickfords' later growth. The stages by which the new opportunities presented by the construction of inland waterways were exploited is examined in the second part of this chapter. Consideration is first given to the coaching trade, in which, by contrast with the canal trade, involvement was transitory, of real importance probably only for a few years in the early 1780s, and left no lasting mark.

I. Coaching

There has yet to be a systematic study of the coaching trade in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries from the points of view of business enterprise and of the creation of an integrated passenger transport service.¹ Similarly there is no analysis of the growth of coaching in Manchester against which Matthew Pickford's

1 Jackman's work Transportation in modern England p 30 ff, remains the most important discussion of the question, to which little of substance has since been added. Dyos & Aldcroft British transport pp 74-76 summarises the present state of knowledge. The more useful books and articles on the coaching trade include C.G.Harper, Stage coach and mail; S. Harris, Old coaching days (1882); S. Harris, The coaching age (1885), a book used extensively by Jackman; A.H.Arkle, 'Early Liverpool coaching' Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire Vol. 73, (1921); H.W.Hart 'Some notes on coach travel 1750-1848' Journal of Transport History Vol.IV (1959-60); H.W.Hart 'Sherman of the Bull and Mouth' Ibid Vol.V (1961-2). The more nostalgic books include W.O.Tristram Coaching days and coaching ways (1888); E.Corbett An old coachman's chatter (1890); T.Cross, The autobiography of a stage coachman (1861, 3 Vols.)

activities might be examined. It is impossible to remedy this deficiency here yet some assessment should be attempted of this aspect of Pickfords' history. The following discussion looks first at Matthew Pickford's possible motives for moving in this direction, and then examines some of Jackman's conclusions and generalisations in respect of coaching.

The first indication that Matthew Pickford's interests had widened to include the coaching trade is an advertisement in the Manchester Mercury, 17 October, 1775. His name appears as one of a group of proprietors operating a coach service between Manchester and London. This partnership was the descendant of the original group of promoters who had started the first regular coach service between Manchester and London in 1760.² For some years the Manchester end had been represented by Samuel Tennant, whose place Matthew Pickford now took. Of the original promoters only John Hanforth, in London, still survived fifteen years later. It was possibly he who introduced Matthew Pickford to the partnership. Since the early months of 1759³ Hanforth had been the proprietor of the Swan With Two Necks in Lad Lane, London, the inn which Matthew Pickford used as his London base from the middle of 1773.

Because the name of Pickfords has been associated so heavily with the carriage of goods, an interest in passenger

2 Manchester Mercury 2 Oct. 1759.

3 Ibid 22 May 1759.

traffic comes almost as a surprise. But the traditional stage-waggoner had always been concerned with both passengers and goods, and Matthew Pickford still advertised in these same terms in the early 1780s.⁴ Passenger traffic was not, of itself, therefore, a novelty. What was new was his participation in a form of transport in which passenger traffic was so predominant.

In addition to normal working costs, stage-coach proprietors had to meet a large number of charges, duty payments for each coach, driver and guard on the road, a mileage duty on passengers, as well as turnpike tolls and possibly also a mileage charge for the hire of the coaches in use.⁵ Even though fares were high, the profits made on passenger traffic alone were apparently not very great. Total revenue was augmented by the carriage of small or 'coach' parcels, high value, small-volume items which could support the high charges levied. Additional income was found by charging baggage at so much per pound beyond a limited free allowance and by charging for the carriage of game. This general point is illustrated by the following rates advertised for the coach service between Manchester and London which Matthew Pickford jointly promoted. Parcels under 10 lbs were charged 2/6, and then at 2½d per pound;

- 4 Manchester Journal 24 Feb. 1781. . . . A late survival is found in Gore's Liverpool directory, 1805, Appendix p 30, where Edward Troughton, carrier between Liverpool and Blackburn, is stated to take goods and passengers.
- 5 Harris The coaching age, p 188 ff; Hart 'Some notes on coach travel' Journal of Transport History, Vol.IV, p 156 ff.

the luggage allowance was 14lbs for inside and 7lbs for outside passengers who both paid 3d per pound on any excess. Turkeys and geese were carried for 2/6d each, hares for 1/6d, partridge and woodcock for 6d each.⁶ Of these additions to total income, the parcels traffic was by far the most important and a major source of revenue. In later years many a railway promotion had as one of its objects the capture of this valuable traffic. The railway companies took pains to secure to themselves all parcels going by the passenger trains and the early loss of parcels to the railways accelerated the collapse of the coaching system.

The importance of parcels may explain Matthew Pickford's interest in the coaching trade. In his primary function as a carrier, parcels traffic would be of interest to him. It is possible to see at least his initial involvement in coaching as an extension of this function. Although manufacturers sent the bulk of their output by the carriers' waggons, small quantities were often sent by coach to meet urgently needed orders.⁷ The carrier who could also provide this facility would no doubt enhance his position in the carrying trade. Even though Matthew Pickford's actual

6 Manchester Mercury 17 Oct. 1775.

7 A.H.John The Walker family, iron founders and lead manufacturers, 1741-1893 (1951) p 75. Unwin Samuel Oldknow and the Arkwrights pp 63-8; there are several letters to Oldknow e.g. 23 April, 10 Oct. 1787, 10 Jan. 1788 asking him to dispatch an order 'by first coach' or part by coach the rest to follow by waggon Letters to Samuel Oldknow 1783-1812, John Rylands Library, English MS 751. One customer, J. Robinson of Manchester (Ibid undated letter), complained to Oldknow about the delays and neglect of the Stockport carrier. "I shall be obliged to send them [i.e. his goods] by the coach which (being heavy goods) will cost me more than I can get for them."

motives are uncertain some rationalisation of the possible gains to him as a carrier can be offered. On the other hand, of course, he might simply have been attracted by an additional opportunity of profit. In any case, it is noticeable that following Matthew Pickford's admission to the partnership stricter conditions were introduced on which claims for loss or damage to parcels would be met, perhaps reflecting his experience of such matters.

Later on, in the early 1780s, Matthew Pickford became more deeply involved in the coaching trade, and engaged in various promotional activities. For a time at least his interests extended to all aspects of coaching. This phase did not last for more than two or three years, but while it continued, the indications are that he intended to enter the trade fully. During these years, coaching appears to have had all the characteristics of a rapid growth industry, and no doubt promised good profits. Perhaps Matthew Pickford saw its potential and hoped to add a valuable complement to his already growing road haulage business. In his primary capacity as a carrier he already catered for the lower class of traffic, general merchandise and any persons unable (or unwilling) to afford a more speedy, although perhaps not necessarily more comfortable, form of travel. The higher class of traffic, more wealthy passengers and more valuable merchandise, was normally controlled by a separate group of operators, but there was no intrinsic reason why any individual carrier should not seek both classes of traffic.

Although both coach-owners and carriers regularly made use of the same inns, it was rare for a carrier to be active in the coaching trade. By and large, coaching was dominated by innkeepers who derived their profit from shares in coaching ventures and, perhaps more importantly, from the food and lodging required by their passengers en route. The typical coaching partnership was composed of inn-keepers at each of the terminal towns, plus the proprietors of those inns at which the coach stopped along the road for refreshment or overnight accommodation. Jackman found that the occasional agriculturalist also took a hand in the trade.⁸ Matthew Pickford, therefore, not being an inn-keeper, stands as an exception to the rule. Another to combine the two functions of coach-owner and carrier was John Swaine of the Spread Eagle, Salford. Although he was an innkeeper his major outside interest seems to have been in the carrying rather than the coaching trade. Swaine was engaged in the London carrying trade from Manchester as early as 1765, and was still in business in 1777 and possibly later.⁹ As for coaching, he had preceded Matthew Pickford in the same partnership, joining it in 1772, but had apparently withdrawn again by 1774.¹⁰ For a time, too, Swaine was a partner in a coach operating between Manchester and Liverpool.¹¹

8 Jackman Op.cit. p 315

9 John Swaine was one of the signatories of the joint advert of the London Carriers in 1765 and was one of the promoters of faster waggon speeds in 1777. Possibly this is the same Swaine to whom there is reference in A.H.John Op.cit. p 73, and in W.B.Crump The Leeds woollen industry 1780-1820 (Thoresby Society Publications, Vol. XXXII, 1929) p 215. This last reference is in a letter of 1794.

10 Manchester Mercury 14 April, 1772, 29 March 1774

11 Manchester directory, 1772

Early coaching partnerships seem to have been very unstable. Individuals frequently dropped out, some to reappear again a little later on. Members of a partnership could quickly find themselves in conflict. For example in June 1783, Matthew Pickford was running a coach to Blackpool in conjunction with Thomas Cooper of Preston; a year later they were in opposition over the same route.¹² As the trade settled down, however, the tendency was for a few people to dominate a particular area. In the first two or three years of the 1780s Matthew Pickford himself would appear to have been one of the leaders in Manchester, to be replaced later by Richard Dixon and Alexander Paterson. In Liverpool, Thomas Cooper & Co. and the Bretherton family seem to have attained a similar position by the end of the eighteenth century.¹³ The degree of dominance achieved by people like Chaplin, Horne and Sherman in London in the 1820s and 1830s was still a long way off.

Coaching was as competitive as any other business, but this did not take the form, as might be anticipated, of price competition. Despite the introduction of several other coach services between Manchester and London in the forty years after 1760, fares between the two places remained notably stable throughout the period. From 1760 to 1785, fares by the different types of conveyances ranged from £1.11.6d to £3.3.0d but centred chiefly between £2.2.0d and £2.5.0d¹⁴.

12 Manchester Mercury 3 June, 1783, 29 June 1784

13 Arkle Op.cit p 20

14 These fares refer to inside passengers; fares for outside passengers were lower, but as not all coaches, even excluding the mails, carried outside passengers, these have been ignored for the sake of comparison.

In terms of price at least, the introduction of the faster mail coaches from 1785 was uncompetitive, since the fare charged was £3.10.0d. The same range of fares continued to apply unchanged at the end of the century. The same principle applied on other routes too. When, in March 1781, Matthew Pickford and others promoted an additional service between Manchester and Liverpool, the times of departures, speed and fares adopted were exactly the same as those of existing coaches. Evidence drawn from Manchester bears out Jackman's conclusion that on the whole, competition had little effect on the general level of coach fares.¹⁵ The promotion of new services seems to have rested on the expectation of additional traffic rather than on a policy of gaining traffic by rate competition.

Competition took the form not of price reductions, but rather the offer of a more comfortable, even a safer journey. A new coach which was introduced in March 1765 advertised its particular advantage as being "on Steel Springs and Safe Braces, Calculated for Pleasure and Safety, on the Gentlest Construction, and most elegant Taste."¹⁶ Similarly a few years later, the proprietors of another new service rested their claims on guaranteeing passengers against the cruder forms of exploitation which were then of fairly common practice.

"The proprietors beg leave to inform their Friends that they will be particularly careful in hiring Steady Drivers, who will not be allowed to ask any Passengers for Money, nor will any Passenger be desired to pay extravagantly for Entertainment on the road."¹⁷

15 Jackman Op.cit. p 343

16 Manchester Mercury 26 March 1765

17 Ibid 20 Aug. 1776.

Safety was ensured by the presence of an armed guard in and out of London.

Travellers could thus choose between varying degrees of comfort, depending on what price they were willing or able to pay. In assessing the total cost of a journey, however, it is important to remember that the coach fare was only one of several charges, which might include tips and especially payments for food and lodging. Consequently as the speed of coach travel was increased and the time taken for journeys proportionally reduced, the net gain to the traveller of a shorter journey must have been considerable. In terms of total costs, therefore, static coach fares do not tell the whole story.

Although rivalry seems to have been keen, especially in the early 1780s, there is no evidence of the cut-throat competition which characterised the later years of the coaching era. As roads improved a soundly based network of coaches was built up, linking Manchester first with London, and then with Liverpool, Nottingham, Sheffield, Birmingham, Bristol and the west of England, Leeds and north east England, and Scotland by way of Preston, Kendal and Carlisle. The general purpose was apparently to bring into connection existing centres of population. Individual routes were no doubt over-subscribed at times, but the overall impression gained from a fairly brief survey of coaching intelligence contained in the newspapers and trade directories is that supply followed rather than anticipated demand. One explicitly speculative projection was a coach service advertised

in May 1787 which also included connections in London for France "on a Speculation of an increased commerce with France, from the Treaty established."¹⁸ Potential demand was sometimes realised by the building of a new road. The development of Blackpool was a case in point. Its growth was considerably influenced by the building of a new road from Ashton-on-Ribble to Clifton, near Kirkham, in 1781. The opening of the road was almost immediately followed by the establishment of a coach service from Manchester promoted by Pickford, Dawson & Co. By means of connections at Preston, Blackpool thus gained access to the national coaching network.¹⁹ Two years earlier the opening of a new road between Halifax and Sheffield had been followed by the establishment of a new coach service from Manchester to London, going by way of Halifax, Huddersfield, Sheffield and the east Midlands.²⁰

Between 1775 and 1780 Matthew Pickford's coaching interests appear to have been limited to the Manchester and London route. A change occurred at the beginning of 1781 and until early in 1785 he was engaged in promoting both short and long distance coaches, sometimes in his own name, more usually in association with one or several partners. At different times during these years, Matthew Pickford's

18 Manchester Mercury 22 May 1787. A parallel on the goods side was the introduction of a waggon service from Birmingham to London, "for the better accomodation of the trade of France, by land to Dover." The waggons would connect in London with those for Dover. Aris' Birmingham Gazette 4 July 1791

19 W.J.Smith 'Blackpool; a sketch of its growth, 1740-1851' Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society Vol.69 (1959) p 76

20 Manchester Mercury 5 Oct. 1779.

name appeared in connection with coaches running to Liverpool, Leeds, Preston, Blackpool, Bath, Birmingham, Glasgow and Edinburgh. It is impossible to estimate how far he was personally active in this work, but the impression gained is that, for a short time at least, he was an important force behind the creation of Manchester's coaching services.

From May 1785 until May 1792 Matthew Pickford's name is absent from the coaching advertisements. It is concluded from this that he had withdrawn from the trade during that time. Although he then re-entered the trade, in connection with the London to Carlisle Royal Mail,²¹ coaching was now probably no more than a minor interest. For the mail coaches, parcels traffic was even more important in order to show a reasonable profit,²² but it is difficult to imagine that this was sufficient to bring him back. Possibly a Royal Mail contract carried a certain prestige which was good for business generally, in much the same way as the possession of a royal warrant nowadays. Matthew Pickford's role in 1795, and probably three years earlier, was to supply the horses for the twenty mile stage from Macclesfield to Manchester.²³ But he was doing this so inefficiently that in that year, Thomas Hasker, the Superintendent of Mails, suggested to the Post-Master General that he should be one of several to lose his contract. However, Matthew still held it two years later,²⁴ and probably retained it until his death.²⁵ Hasker's complaint that "he has lost much time

21 Ibid 22 May 1792

22 E.Vale The mail-coach men of the late eighteenth century
(1960) p 54

23 Ibid p 119

24 Ibid p 240

25 An interest in coaching was maintained for a short while after Matthew Pickford's death.

and having other great occupations does not attend to the coach duty"²⁶ suggests that by this time, Matthew Pickford's major interests lay elsewhere. Indeed within a few months of leaving the coaching trade, Matthew Pickford was already exploring the possibilities presented by the construction of long lines of canals. Matthew Pickford's withdrawal from the one trade was almost contemporary with his entry to the other.

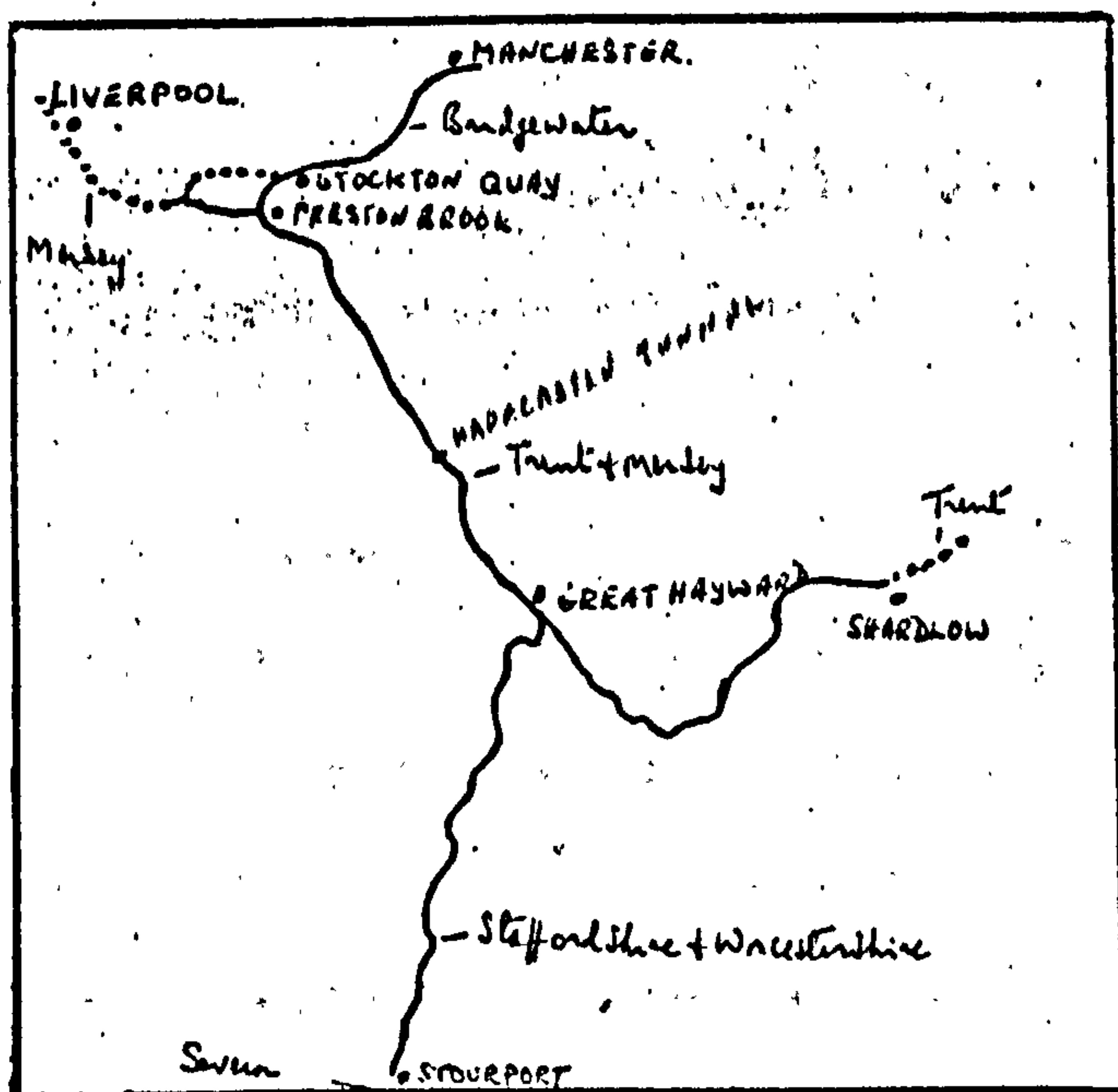
II Canals

Matthew Pickford's interest in canals was aroused in the mid 1780s. Until that time canals had little to offer a business which was primarily concerned with the conveyance of freight traffic between Manchester and London. The impetus behind the first generation of canals, (those sanctioned in the late 1760s and early 1770s following the success of the Bridgewater) had been to secure an effective linkage of the three rivers the Trent, Mersey and Severn together with a connection to London by way of the river Thames.²⁷ The first object was achieved much the more easily. Both the Oxford and Coventry companies, which were responsible for the line to London, experienced severe financial difficulties during the war years of the 1770s and early 1780s, and construction was at a standstill for a lengthy period. It was not until about 1785 that these two companies showed renewed signs of vigour, and the long

26 Vale Op.cit. p 119.

27 For a general account of canal development, Jackman Transportation in modern England p 35 ff; Dyos & Aldcroft British transport Chap. 3. C. Hadfield British canals (2nd ed. 1959); C. Hadfield The canal age (Newton Abbot 1968) together with the various volumes, written by him, individually or jointly, in the David & Charles Canals of the British Isles series.

The early canal links, 1760s-1770s,
between Lancashire and the midlands.



awaited through-route from London to Lancashire was finally completed. The aim here is to look primarily at the commercial use of the canals; to illustrate the early growth of the canal carrying trade from Manchester, and to assess the significance of canal development from the viewpoint of a Manchester based firm of London carriers.

Before the completion of the Bridgewater canal, Manchester's water communications were limited to the Mersey & Irwell navigation, which by the early 1730s had been rendered fully navigable to Liverpool. The importance of the Bridgewater, open throughout from Worsley to Manchester in 1764²⁸ was that it convincingly demonstrated the viability of the canal principle and removed dependency on river navigations. In the years following, access by inland waterways to other parts of the country was steadily extended. The Trent & Mersey canal was begun in July 1766 and progressively opened for traffic from June 1770. From a junction with the Trent & Mersey canal at Great Hayward, the Staffordshire & Worcestershire canal, fully open for traffic from May 1772, connected with the river Severn at Stourport and so opened up the route to Bristol. The same year, Birmingham was also brought into the growing network when the Birmingham canal, which had a junction with the Staffordshire & Worcestershire canal at Aldersley, commenced operations. Within a few years, therefore, a rudimentary

28 W.H.Chaloner 'Manchester in the latter half of the eighteenth century.' Bulletin of the John Rylands Library Vol. 42 (1959-60) points out, p 46, that the customary opening date of 1761 refers only to the section of the canal as far at Stretford. The building of the final stretch into Manchester itself, together with associated terminal facilities, was completed only in 1764.

canal complex emerged, forming an inverted T. The horizontal arms extended to link the two arterial rivers of the east and west Midlands, their seaports and catchment areas; the vertical arm reached up to the industrial regions of south Lancashire and north Cheshire. When, in March 1776, the Bridgewater extension to the Mersey at Runcorn was finally finished, and the Trent & Mersey fully open the following year, there had been created the nucleus of a new transport system, uniting two key growth areas of the Industrial Revolution.

The canals were opened and built in piecemeal fashion, a pattern which was repeated in their progressive use by traders. The introduction of canal carrying in Manchester other than the conveyance of coal from Worsley and the Duke's boats to and from Warrington²⁹ came early in 1774. In May of that year Hugh Henshall & Co announced the commencement of a service from Birmingham and Stourport to Manchester and Liverpool.³⁰ Details in this and a later notice³¹ demonstrate in broad outline how the firm combined canal and road conveyance. Two main traffic flows were envisaged - to Birmingham, Bristol and the west of England by way of the Severn, and to Derby, Nottingham, east coast towns and also London, by way of the Trent. All traffic would pass over the Bridgewater and Trent & Mersey canals as far as Great Hayward and then take the appropriate line by canal and river. Henshall & Co. must have been one of the earliest firms to

29 Manchester directory (Raffald) 1772, p 59.

30 Manchester Mercury 3 May 1774.

31 Ibid 18 Oct. 1774.

combine canal and river conveyance in a single service. However, Henshall & Co. introduced its service before the canal route was fully available and so road haulage had to be used temporarily for part of the way. There were two obstructions on the canal route at the time, the Harecastle tunnel on the Trent & Mersey canal, which was not open for traffic until April 1775, and the Preston Brook tunnel, the entry to the Bridgewater canal, which was opened in February 1775. These obstructions were by-passed by using road haulage from Burslem Wharf, just south of the Harecastle tunnel, to Stockton Quay near Warrington. This combination of road and canal conveyance for long distance traffic continued to be necessary for many years.

At this intermediate stage, the full benefits of canal carrying, especially that of lowering transport costs, was inevitably delayed. Recourse to land carriage for part of the way, involved not only a more expensive form of transportation, but also additional handling at each trans-shipment point. Excessive work of this kind was very costly and enormously increased the risk of damage or loss. Both factors combined to inflate overall costs, but even so the cost to ^{the} user was still considerably cheaper than road charges for an equivalent distance. Baines figures,³² in table 3.1, were designed to show the reduction in carriage rates which followed the opening of the Trent & Mersey canal by comparison with previous land rates. When combined with the rates quoted by Henshall & Co. in 1774, they demonstrate the full reduction in costs once the Harecastle and Preston Brook tunnels were open.

32 They are reproduced by Jackman, Op.cit. p 724 who accepts them as reliable. See next page.

Table 3.1

A comparison of land and canal tonnage charges
between Manchester and certain towns

	<u>Land</u> £	<u>Canal (1774)</u> £	<u>Canal</u> (after 1777) £
Birmingham	4. 0. 0	2. 12. 6	1. 10. 0
Derby	3. 0. 0	3. 0. 0	1. 10. 0
Lichfield	4. 0. 0	2. 3. 0	1. 0. 0
Nottingham	4. 0. 0	3. 5. 0	2. 0. 0
Wolverhampton	4. 13. 4	2. 8. 0	1. 5. 0

Source: Columns 1 and 3. Baines History of the commerce and town of Liverpool p 440

Column 2. Henshall's advertisement Manchester Mercury 18 Oct. 1774

An element of land charges would be contained in all of Henshall's rates, and in those for Derby and Nottingham they are so heavy as to entirely, or nearly so, off-set the benefit of canal conveyance. However, where more continuous use of canals was possible, e.g. to Birmingham or Wolverhampton, the immediate economies were substantial. Even at this intermediate stage, then, the potential of canals was considerable: their more effective contribution to a cheaper service over any great distance would depend on how quickly the road haulage bottlenecks could be removed.

The canal carrying trade was organised almost entirely by private carriers.³³ This was chiefly because the canal

33 Jackman Op.cit. p 432 ff

companies were, by their Acts, prohibited from acting as carriers. Unlike turnpike trusts, canal construction was undertaken by joint-stock companies, private concerns seeking a profitable return on their investment. Parliament was sensitive to the danger that if the companies were able to control both toll charges and freight rates over their lines, large scale local monopolies would be created which would not be in the public interest. Consequently, until the Railway & Canal Act of 1845, the power of canal companies was limited to the taking of tolls.³⁴ The main exceptions to this rule were the privately owned canals, of which the Bridgewater was the most conspicuous and the most important. As well as owning the canal, the Duke of Bridgewater's vessels carried both passengers and goods between Liverpool and Manchester, in addition to the output of his collieries in Worsley.³⁵

Parliament's intentions could, however, be side-stepped; there was nothing to prevent an individual or a group of shareholders from setting up as a carrying concern, or even such a concern being used as a front by a canal company. This seems to have been the case with the firm of Hugh Henshall & Co.³⁶ Henshall was James Brindley's brother-in-law

34 Because tolls were the sole source of revenue, Parliament required new canal companies whose line would subsequently reduce the traffic on existing canals to guarantee the income of canals so affected.

35 Jackman Op.cit. p 435; the Trust which administered his estate after the Duke's death retained this privilege. Jackman believed that the Basingstoke canal company was one of a very few public companies which were allowed to carry.

36 The following discussion of the canal carrying firms of Henshall & Co. and Worthington & Gilbert, are based on Hadfield Canals of west midlands (the early pages) and A.C.Wood 'The history of trade and transport on the river Trent' Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire Vol. LIV (1950) p 35

and an engineer in his own right; he was clerk of works for the Trent & Mersey and ultimately responsible for the completion of the canal after Brindley's death in 1772. The carrying concern bearing his name was set up by a group of proprietors to attract traffic on^{to} the canal. Initially it was independent but was later taken over by the canal company. The firm was actively engaged in business between Shardlow, on the river Trent, and Great Hayward by the middle of 1770 and presumably extended its coverage as the various canals were progressively opened for navigation. In 1774, the firm was evidently being used to draw feeder traffic from east and west on to the canal company's main line. In 1790 the bulk of traffic passing between the Trent & Mersey canal and the river Trent was handled by Henshall & Co. The use of a front company was successful and attracted considerable business to the canal.

On 21 March 1776, the final section of the Bridgewater canal at Norton Priory was completed and the canal opened throughout, allowing uninterrupted passage off the Trent & Mersey to Liverpool as well as Manchester.³⁷ Henshall & Co. extended their activities and from 1777³⁸ were operating from Castle Quay, the terminus of the Bridgewater canal in Manchester. For a few years Henshall & Co. remained the

37 Previously only direct passage to Manchester had been possible.

38 V.I.Tomlinson 'Early warehouses on Manchester waterways' Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society Vol.71 (1961) p 129 ff.

only canal carrier out of Manchester other than the Duke of Bridgewater. From the early 1780s, however, this situation slowly began to change. In 1782 a new firm of canal carriers, Worthington & Gilbert, began to compete with Henshall & Co. for the trade between Manchester and Stourport. This firm also was not a genuinely independent carrying concern, since it possessed a favourable position vis-a-vis the Duke of Bridgewater. Worthington was an established road carrier, but his partner, John Gilbert, was Agent to the Duke and a member of the Trent & Mersey canal committee. Competing for basically the same traffic as Henshall & Co., conflict was inevitable; not only did Worthington & Gilbert benefit from such traffic as the Duke controlled, but complaints were soon voiced of undue preference at Castle Quay. Loss of traffic by Henshall & Co. caused a rift within the Trent & Mersey canal company. The committee split into pro- and anti- Bridgewater factions, and it was some time before a settlement was reached. The issue was particularly disputed because competition between the two concerns was centred entirely on existing traffic. Canal carriage from Manchester was still limited to the midland regions.

For some years traffic from Manchester to London could be conveyed only part way by canal. The rest of the journey had to be ^{by}_^ coastal shipping or by road. Despite these limitations, the use of canal conveyance for traffic passing between Manchester and London slowly developed. By the mid 1780s Henshall & Co. had extended its interests to include such traffic. Goods were conveyed the whole length of the Bridgewater and Trent & Mersey canals to Shardlow, at the junction with the river Trent, and from

there transported overland to London.³⁹

Traffic had been passing between London and Manchester at least in part by canal since 1783. Among the carrying services to Manchester in that year was one "carriage to the canals and thence in barges" from the Saracen's Head, Snowhill, London, departing three times a week.⁴⁰ This is the first reference which has been found to the use of canal conveyance between the two places but the names of those responsible remains unknown. It is just possible that this venture was Matthew Pickford's for only six years later the Saracen's Head can be identified as one of the inns used by Pickfords for canal conveyance.⁴¹ By that time Matthew Pickford had already taken over Henshall & Co.'s interest in London traffic. In December 1786 a notice in the Manchester Mercury announced that "Matthew Pickford continues Hugh Henshall and Company's canal conveyance of goods, etc., to London."⁴² Since Henshall & Co. remained an important firm of canal carriers, the take-over must have been limited to this one part of its business. As the canal route between London and Lancashire steadily developed during the succeeding years, goods were taken by water over greater distances until land carriage was eliminated. However the chronology of Pickfords'

39 Interestingly enough not by sea, despite the proximity of Gainsborough and Hull by way of the Trent.

40 The complete guide...to London (Osborn) 1783 entry for Manchester. Insofar as the canal services can be identified from the entries in the trade directories, Pickfords appears to have been the only firm for some years operating canal waggons from London to Manchester.

41 Lowndes directory, 1789, part 2, Guide to stage-coaches, waggons..., p 56, p 99.

42 Manchester Mercury 19 Dec. 1786.

adoption of canal working between Manchester and London demonstrates how late it was before partial reliance on road haulage finally ceased.

From the end of 1786, when the take-over of Henshall's London interests was announced, it is possible to build up some impression of Matthew Pickford's growing involvement in the canal carrying trade. Goods were forwarded from Manchester four times a week and in order to expedite their delivery in London, at the Swan with Two Necks, Lad lane, the connecting waggons were moved from Shardlow to Rugeley, a town further north on the Trent & Mersey canal, but on a more direct line for London.⁴³ In 1788 a canal waggon left London daily for Manchester from the Swan in Lad lane, the same inn to which Matthew Pickford had announced two years earlier that his London canal traffic from Manchester would be directed.⁴⁴ In 1790 Pickfords was the only carrying concern operating from the Swan.⁴⁵

In May 1788 Matthew Pickford approached the Coventry and Oxford canal companies for wharf and warehouse accommodation at Polesworth and Braunston on their respective canals.⁴⁶ He also asked that until a junction was made with the Birmingham & Fazeley canal at Fazeley (which would thereby complete the canal route through to Lancashire) he should

43 Ibid 19 Dec. 1786

44 Kent's London directory, 1788, incorporating Shopkeeper and Tradesman's assistant 1788 p 72

45 The Universal British directory Vol. 1 (1st ed., 2nd issue, 1790) p 506.

46 Orders of general meetings and minutes of committee of proprietors, 7 May, 1788, CVC 1/3. The earliest book of rent payments for the lease of warehouses unfortunately dates only from 1793 CVC 4/131.

be allowed a toll reduction of two shillings a ton to off-set the cost and inconvenience of transporting the goods by road over the uncompleted section of canal. The Coventry canal company found these terms acceptable, and by inference the Oxford company also, and the trade commenced within a few weeks. Matthew Pickford's interest was clearly in the route to London. Polesworth lies on the Coventry canal company's portion of the north-south line, and not on the section of canal leading to Coventry itself. However it is also implicit in these arrangements that Matthew Pickford did not intend to use the Oxford canal south of Braunston. Neither canal was complete in 1788 but whereas he made temporary arrangements with the Coventry canal company there is no sign of similar arrangements with the Oxford company. He apparently preferred to approach London by road rather than by the circuitous route of the Oxford canal south of Braunston and then on to London by way of the Thames. In 1789 a navigation waggon was listed as departing for Manchester daily from the Swan, Blossom's Inn, and Saracen's Head, the three London inns which Pickfords was identified as then using.⁴⁷

In the summer of 1790 the final section of the Coventry canal, between Atherstone and Fazeley, was completed. Since the final section of the Oxford canal, between Oxford and Banbury, had also been opened at the beginning of the same year, there was now available a through water-route, by

⁴⁷ Lowndes' London directory, part 2, p 56, p 99.

river and canal, from London to the towns of the midlands and the north-west. The conditions had therefore been created for traffic to flow freely between these places, yet even so the need for road transport was still not removed.

At the beginning of the 1790s Pickfords' canal operations from London comprised a waggon service which departed from the three familiar inns, the Swan, Saracen's Head and Blossom's, at 3 p.m. each day.⁴⁸ The waggon was listed as serving Braunston, Atherstone, Tamworth, Newcastle-under-Line, Warrington and various other places in Lancashire and Cheshire. Braunston stands on the Oxford canal, and the other places mentioned either on or adjacent to the Coventry, Trent & Mersey, and Bridgewater canals. Continuous canal conveyance evidently only started at Braunston. Conveyance by road over the ninety or so miles between London and Braunston was apparently preferable to the detour and hazards of the through-route by way of the Thames.⁴⁹ At least for Pickfords' particular range of traffic, the availability of a through water-route was not of itself sufficient to draw its traffic off the roads. Indeed the road remained competitive until there was a canal link direct to London.

Throughout the 1790s Pickfords' traffic continued to enter London by road. Moreover goods were carried an even greater distance overland as Braunston was abandoned in favour of Coventry as the place of trans-shipment. This

48 Universal British directory Vol.1 p 506; also Bailey's London directory 1790

49 For the condition of the Thames route E.C.R.Hadfield 'The Thames Navigation and the canals 1770-1830', Economic History Review, 2nd series, Vol.XIV (1944-5) p 172.

development is extremely puzzling, given the fact of Coventry's greater distance from London and the many miles of canal conveyance sacrificed. Perhaps some clue is found in the following entry in the committee minutes of the Oxford canal company in November 1789.

"It is the opinion of this committee that as the warehouses at Braunston were erected for the accommodation of the public in general notice is to be given to Mr. Pickford who now occupies them, to quit the same at Mid-summer next in order that the same may be laid open for traders in general." 50

No further reason for the committee's decision was given. Did both sides feel a sense of resentment - Pickford that he had been unfairly treated, the committee that there was no sign that he intended to use the rest of their canal? Or perhaps was it that having lost his position at Braunston he could only find satisfactory accommodation at Coventry?

Whatever the reason, it was to Coventry that the move was made. This must have occurred during 1790 for by the beginning of the following year the Coventry canal company was already being asked for extensions to Pickfords' existing warehouse space.⁵¹ Coventry was itself greatly stimulated by the completion of its canal and especially by the junction with the Trent & Mersey canal. A contemporary commented on the remarkable flow of goods from all parts of the north to the city, "from whence they are taken to London by Mr. Pickford's waggons, who has large warehouses on the wharf to store goods."⁵² Similarly the Manchester

50 Minutes of committee 10 Nov. 1789, OXC 1/4

51 Rough minutes of committee meetings, 5 Jan. 1791, CVC/1/23; also Ibid 5, 12 Dec. 1792.

52 Universal British directory Vol 2, (County, A to D, 1791) p 618

directory for 1794 has Matthew Pickford's boats departing each afternoon (except Sunday) from Castle Quay to Coventry. "N.B. The goods for London and beyond, are forwarded from Coventry upon Fly-waggons."⁵³ There is, then, no doubt that Coventry was being used in this way.

Coventry remained Pickford's trans-shipment place until 1796 or 7, that is until the Grand Junction Canal, built explicitly to bye-pass the long detour between London and Braunston via the Thames and Oxford canal,⁵⁴ was well on the way to completion. The Grand Junction was being built from 1793 and although mostly completed by 1800 it was divided into two sections by the need to drive a tunnel through a hill at Blisworth, in Northamptonshire. The tunnel was not finally finished until 1805. As usual, however, the two completed sections of the canal were brought into use as soon as they were ready; until 1805 they were linked by a special tramway laid down over the hill.⁵⁵ The northern section of the canal became usable in 1797 and it was then that Pickford's trans-shipment point was switched from Coventry to Blisworth.

Matthew Pickford first approached the Grand Junction canal company in July 1796⁵⁶ and presumably worked out satisfactory terms on which he would use the canal for

53 Manchester and Salford directory (Schole's, 1794) p 186; also Universal British directory Vol.3 (County, E to M, 1794) p 779.

54 C. Hadfield 'The Grand Junction canal' Journal of Transport History Vol. IV, (1959-60) p 96; also C. Hadfield The canals of the east midlands p 108 ff.

55 V.A. Hatley 'The Blisworth hill railway, 1800-1905' Northamptonshire Antiquarian Society (1962-3), p 14 ff.

56 Minutes, meetings of general assembly of proprietors and general committee, 27 July 1796, GJC 1/39.

by August the following year he already had a wharf at Blisworth and the canal company was agreeing to build an adequate road from his wharf over Blisworth hill to the Northampton turnpike.⁵⁷ From 1797 Pickfords' fly-boats left Castle Quay each day for Coventry and Blisworth, but London goods were forwarded by waggon from Blisworth.⁵⁸ By November 1797 Pickfords' warehouse at Blisworth had become the centre of "a most valuable trade...between London and the northern parts of the kingdom."⁵⁹ Two years later Pickfords' waggons were listed as departing twice a day from London to Blisworth, where they connected with daily fly-boats to Manchester.⁶⁰ It appears that waggons continued to be used in this context until the Blisworth tunnel had been completed.⁶¹

There was every reason why Pickfords should use the northern section of the Grand Junction canal once it became available; what is less clear is why and how much use was made of the southern section before the tunnel was finished. In October 1797 several members of the Grand Junction were asked to meet at Two Waters, a point on the canal near Hemel Hempstead, "to consider the accommodation necessary for Mr. Pickford," with powers to "give orders for carrying the interest of the company into effect."⁶²

57 Ibid 8 Aug.1797.

58 Manchester and Salford directory (Scholes, 1797) p 185.

59 Minutes, meetings of proprietors and general committee 15 Nov. 1797 GJC 1/39.

60 W. Holden Holden's new, easy and complete referance (sic) p 63.

61 The Manchester trade directories include this form of entry in 1800 and 1804. There is no further directory until 1808.

62 Minutes, meetings of proprietors and general committee 11 Oct. 1797, GJC/ 1/39.

The precise purpose of the meeting was not given. The point is, was the meeting place significant? Was it just a convenient place to meet or did the "accommodation" mentioned refer to Two Waters. If the latter, Matthew Pickford would be directing his attention to the southern section of the canal. This part of the canal, as far as Tring, was opened in 1799. In February 1798 Pickford also asked for accommodation at the company's wharf at Whitefriars, on the Thames.⁶³ One explanation would be that in both cases Pickford was anticipating future rather than current needs. Yet insofar as Pickfords' interests were still centred on Manchester-London traffic, and there is no reason to question that, then the Whitefriars' wharf would be irrelevant since by that date the line of the Grand Junction canal had already been changed to a terminus in Paddington instead of the Thames at Brentford. Perhaps Pickfords was engaged in some local trade on the southern section of the canal.

Some supporting evidence of such an interest is provided by the memories of a Pickford employée, recalled in old age, who started with the firm in 1790.

"179- canal open to Brentford: wharf taken at Whitefriars: Barges loaded 2 or 3 a week & trans-shipped at Brentford to Boats" 64

63 Ibid 14 Feb. 1798.

64 William Wright to Joseph Baxendale, 25 May 1852. Wright was recording the memories of his father of the 'old days.' The original letter was lent to Hon. Mary Pickford during her work but is now missing from Joseph Baxendale's papers at Framfield Place. Miss Pickford's copy of the letter is at KS/2/5 (b)

Although this evidence is open to some question concerning its reliability in points of detail, there is no reason to doubt its substance. Given that, the traffic referred to here does not easily fit with what is known from other sources about the organisation of the Manchester traffic. The lease of a wharf at Whitefriars in 1798 only seems to make sense if an interest in some local traffic is posited. Moreover the Grand Junction canal company was approached for facilities to land Pickfords' goods at Brentford, but not until April 1800.⁶⁵ Although the various bits of evidence are broadly consistent, the precise nature and significance of these activities at this time remain unclear.

Although the details of Pickfords' early canal working remain obscure, there can be no doubt of the firm's growing involvement in the canal trade. It is clear from the evidence of the trade directories and the records of those canal companies with which pickfords had dealings that its canal interests were chiefly centred on the long distance trade between London and Lancashire. Local canal operations were confined to some possible activities in and out of London. The Grand Junction, Oxford and Coventry canals together constituted a major portion of the through water-route between the south and north of England. Each canal company was contacted before its section was finished and ready for trade. In addition to these canals, Pickfords' boats also travelled over part of the Birmingham canal. Since Pickfords was not trading to and from Birmingham at the time, this was presumably confined to that portion of the company's waterway which formed part of the north-south route.

⁶⁵ Minutes, meetings of proprietors and general committee
15 April 1800, GJC 1/40.

It is possible to indicate the scale of Pickfords' canal trade only in general terms. In 1795 ten boats were registered in Matthew Pickford's name as trading between Manchester and Coventry.⁶⁶ Henshall & Co. had sixty-five boats registered.⁶⁷ These ten boats were only a beginning however, for within a couple of years of Matthew's death their number had risen to twenty-eight.⁶⁸ This was not the only capital investment specific to the canal trade, as wharf and warehouse facilities were also required. Premises were taken at various times at Polesworth, Braunston Coventry, Blisworth and Whitefriars but, for reasons already seen, several of these are likely to have been held only temporarily. More permanent accommodation was taken in Manchester and London. In Manchester a small warehouse became necessary at Castle Quay by 1794,⁶⁹ to which further premises were later added. Substantial premises were taken at Paddington, in London, from the time of the canal's opening.⁷⁰ Canals undoubtedly significantly increased the size and scale of Pickfords' business.

It would be illuminating if these developments could be translated into tonnage figures, but unfortunately that is impossible. The only relevant evidence before Matthew Pickfords' death so far discovered are isolated tonnage payments to two canal companies, the Oxford and the Birmingham.

66 Cheshire Register of Boats and Barges, 1795, Cheshire Record Office. This was part of a national registration carried out under the auspices of the Admiralty. I must thank Mr. H. Hanson for this information.

67 C.Hadfield The canals of the west midlands (Newton Abbot 1966) p 38.

68 see below p110

69 V.I.Tomlinson 'Early warehouses on Manchester waterways' Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, Vol.71(1961) pp 145-6; H.Clegg 'The third Duke of Bridgewater's canal works in Manchester' Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, Vol.65 (1955) p 51 ff.

70 see below p126

In August 1798 Matthew Pickford forwarded two bills to the Oxford company in payment of tonnage accounts, one for £184.7.8d and one for £143.1.0d⁷¹ The tonnage accounts of the Birmingham canal company indicate that Pickfords was a relatively small user of that line. A payment of £85.10.5d was recorded for 25 May 1799 and another, £91.17.7d, for 31 August 1799. At this latter date Henshall & Co.'s account totalled £657.⁷²

The development of canals had an important but delayed impact on long-distance goods carriage between London and Lancashire. In Pickfords' experience, land carriage was not finally eliminated until the early years of the nineteenth century. Undoubtedly canals were very important in the context of local trade and economic development long before this date, but in terms of a national system of communications their importance as the primary form of transportation can be easily overstated. If Pickfords' experience could be generalised with that of other carriers, some measure might be available of testing the contribution of canals to the long-distance carrying trade and thus to the economy in a wider context.

As far as Pickfords is concerned, the 1790s marked its commitment to canals and thus a decisive stage in the firm's development. Permanent effects were left in the form of

71 Collection of historical...records p 27 OXC 4/110.

72 These entries are at the back of a letter book for 1793-1804, BCN 4/371 B.

boats, premises and a new scale of working - none of which resulted from the prior flirtation with the coaching trade. If Pickfords did not pioneer canal working between Manchester and London, it was certainly involved at an early date. The canal trade came to bulk increasingly large, and during the next forty years became the foundation of Pickfords' business.

CHAPTER 4.

PICKFORDS AND THE CARRYING TRADE, 1750-1800

I. The growth of carriage

The land-carriers' business developed in medieval times out of the corn and cloth trades. In time it became possible to concentrate on the carriage of goods of all kinds, until what had originally been a subsidiary activity common to several trades became a specialised occupation. The full growth of long-distance carrying, and ultimately the conditions within which a firm like Pickfords could operate, depended on two main conditions, the expansion of output, chiefly in the manufacturing sector, and the degree to which that expansion was accompanied by increasing specialisation.

Transport facilities of all kinds expanded considerably during the eighteenth century, and with them the number and scope of the carriers. However it is easier to suggest, as a generalisation, that the opportunities for specialist functions increased during the period than demonstrate the case by particular examples. Indeed at first sight the opposite might seem to be the case. Agriculture continued to dominate the economy throughout the century and most manufacturing activity was associated with it to a greater or lesser extent. In such traditional occupations as brewing or the leather trades, the basic raw materials derived from agriculture so that, in a telling phrase, "manufacture may be seen more significantly as processing the harvest."¹

1. P. Mathias The brewing industry in England, 1700-1830 (C.U.P. 1959), pxxi.

No manufacture displayed this close linkage of industry and agriculture better than that of wool. Not only was the wool home produced, but the traditional hand-work process of manufacture organised chiefly by small masters, who retained a minor interest in farming to provide food for their families and fodder for their horses, remained typical until at least the 1830s.² Indeed in any industry where the domestic system of manufacture prevailed there was a close connection with agriculture.

In all such trades, the degree of specialisation was small: either production was for a local market or, as in the woollen industry, the individual entrepreneur combined within his own enterprise all the functions involved in the production and sale of his goods. However in the 'new' industries which rose to importance during the eighteenth century, chiefly coal, iron and cotton, a somewhat different pattern emerged. For most of the century the coal industry and iron to a lesser degree, remained closely bound up with landownership.³ Coal mining was a part of estate exploitation, and even then was secondary to agriculture. Even so, one aspect of the industry was highly developed, namely the

2 Mantoux The Industrial Revolution, p 60; H.Heaton The Yorkshire woollen and worsted industries, esp. p 290 ff. W.B.Crump The Leeds woollen industry 1780-1820 (Thoresby Society Publications, Vol. xxxii, 1929) esp. p 77 ff, the diary of Joseph Rogerson. Aikin Description of the country --- round Manchester, p 93 commenting on the use of land near the West Riding manufacturing towns noted that "the manufacturer has his enclosures, in which he keeps milch cows for the support of his family, and horses for the conveyance of his goods."

3 T.S.Ashton and J. Sykes The coal industry of the eighteenth century, (M.U.P. second edition, 1964) pp 1-4; T.S.Ashton Iron and steel in the Industrial Revolution (M.U.P. 1924) p 209.

distribution and marketing of coal in London from the Northumberland and Durham coalfields. The long chain of specialist agents, fitters, ships' masters, factors, lightermen, and successive buyers,⁴ probably constituted one of the most developed service structures in the economy before the rise of cotton. The cotton industry grew up on the basis of the pre-existing textile manufacture, the linen and fustian trades, which has already possessed a certain degree of specialisation.⁵ The emergence in the later eighteenth century of selling agents, brokers and other dealers reinforced existing trends and demonstrates how the rapid rise of cotton was accompanied by an equal demand for specialised services.⁶

Specialisation of product developed on a geographical basis.⁷ From the beginning of the eighteenth century areas of England were associated with particular ranges of products - Birmingham with guns and small metal manufactures, Sheffield with cutlery, Leeds and the West Riding with woollens, Lancashire with linens and fustians. During the course of the century, local specialisation was intensified and its force shaped the structure of the local economy. Allied industries or preparatory processes grew up; specialised services, including marketing and distribution, emerged. "Lines of communication were adapted to the needs of the regional trade: specialised dealers, packers and carriers appeared."⁸ Such developments

4 Ashton and Sykes, Op.Cit. Chap. xii, p 194

5 Wadsworth and Mann Cotton trade and industrial Lancashire the early chapters.

6 Ibid, the later chapters; also M.M.Edwards The growth of the British cotton trade, 1780-1815 (M.U.P. 1967) passim.

7 Ashton Economic history of England, p 96 ff.

8 Ibid p 97.

are of great significance, as they indicate the separation of centres of production and consumption. Defoe's assertion that even in the early eighteenth century every part of England produced something for the London market is well known. London, because of its disproportionate share of population and purchasing power, remained the major retail market for much of the century, and also the most important export outlet. As the volume of output rose, the pressure on transport to overcome the distance between producer and consumer or exporter could only increase. Most of the pressure was doubtless borne by water transport, hence the familiar river and port improvement schemes of these years; but land carriage, as seen already, had its part to play.⁹

Transport, however, was more than a bridge between producer and consumer. Its wider contribution was to underpin the commercial and credit structure on which eighteenth century industry was based. Banking, credit, the discounting of bills, all were centred on London. Marketing of the products of industry was similarly directed, that of the cotton industry in particular.¹⁰ As early as the seventeenth century, the Manchester linen drapers sought openings in London, and their successors the following century did likewise. Every provincial manufacturer had his London warehouseman who not only distributed goods, but who also provided information on the most recent market trends. Indeed by the beginning of the nineteenth century, William Gray of Bolton relied on such weekly reports from his London

9 The contribution of land carriage to the provincial retail trade is indicated by Willan An eighteenth century shopkeeper, and Marshall (ed) The autobiography of William Stout of Lancaster.

10 The following is based on the works of Wadsworth and Mann, and Edwards.

agents, in the light of which the following week's production was planned.¹¹ Such a degree of organisation necessarily demanded from transport at least a minimum level of efficiency to allow the exchange of commercial information, for which speed and reliability were essential, as well as the actual carriage of goods. This aspect has received little attention. In the most recent study of the cotton trade, the purchase of cotton wool, where knowledge of short-run price movements was important, and of the sale of yarn and cloth, often at a distance, are discussed with scarcely any reference to the transport facilities which alone made these activities possible.¹² When a manufacturer ceased to transport his own products he became dependent on the reliability and efficiency of the available regional carriers - at least before the advent of railways. The carriers provision of transport services is thus an essential part of the framework.

As the eighteenth century advanced, expansion of output was accompanied by increasing specialisation in certain parts of industry. For the growth of long-distance road carrying trade, two developments were of particular importance. The first was the location of some manufacturing processes away from their major market centres. The second was the extended scale of industrial activity which compelled entrepreneurs to shed some functions and to concentrate on the organisation

11 Edwards Op.cit. p 154.

12 Edwards Op.cit. chaps. 5 to 8.

of production.¹³ One task so released was the transportation of goods to the market.

The changing location of an industry and its spatial separation from its markets is best illustrated from the textile trades. The silk industry, in which for much of the century spinning and weaving were quite distinct, provides a case in point. Silk-throwing was begun at Derby in 1718¹⁴ and later in several towns of north Staffordshire and north east Cheshire. The silk spun in these and other mills was processed by the Spitalfields weavers in London. In Macclesfield, the most important of the Cheshire silk towns, spinning and weaving were not combined until 1790. The parts of Cheshire and Staffordshire where silk was spun lacked any form of water transport - Macclesfield, for example, was entirely land-locked until its canal was opened in 1831 - so the conveyance of the thread must have depended at least in part on road haulage.

A good example of the migration of an industry was that of calico-printing.¹⁵ Until the mid-eighteenth century calico printing was monopolised by London, mainly because, as the chief port of entry, it had ready access to the imported calicoes of the East India Company. Later on, London's

13 For a more extensive discussion of this point with reference to the retail trade, D. Alexander Retailing in England during the Industrial Revolution (1970) Chap. 1.

14 W. Hutton The history of Derby (2nd ed. 1817) p 161 ff. There is little published work on the silk trade. Mantoux has scattered references pp 193-7; see, however, G.B.Hertz 'The English silk industry in the eighteenth century' English Historical Review, 1909 pp 710-727.

15 Wadsworth and Mann Cotton trade and industrial Lancashire p 129 ff; G. Turnbull A history of the calico printing industry of Great Britain (Altrincham, 1951) p 23.

trading dominance preserved its monopoly after Scotch and Irish linens had been introduced into use. Similarly with 'Blackburn greys,' a form of cloth made in Lancashire which proved to be highly suitable for printing; it was taken to London in its raw state, by land carriage.¹⁶ The use of these cotton greys became so extensive that, it has been suggested,¹⁷ it eventually became cheaper to print the cloth in Lancashire. Calico-printing was begun in Lancashire soon after 1750 and by 1800 the entire industry had moved there from London. Printed calicoes were used particularly for furnishings and throughout the period this trade continued to be centred on London. The 'London furniture-printers' had their designs printed in Lancashire and then retailed them through their West End shops or provincial agents.¹⁸ Consequently although an entire stage in the process of manufacture had left London, the market structure was basically unchanged. At some point, therefore, the printed cloths had to be taken to London, and at that point transport services had to be provided.

Evidence of entrepreneurs ceasing to concern themselves with the transport of their goods is also found in the textile trades. Even in the early seventeenth century not all merchants personally organised the transportation of their raw materials and manufactured goods. In 1626, for example, the Chetham brothers of Manchester employed carriers to take their packs of cotton wool from London to Manchester and

16 J. Ogden A description of Manchester ...by a native of the town (Manchester 1783) pp 85-6.

17 By Ogden, Ibid

18 Edwards Growth of British cotton trade, pp 147-8; P. Floud 'The dark-ground floral chintz style' The Connoisseur, April 1957, p 174; P. Floud 'The drab style and the designs of Daniel Goddard' The Connoisseur, May 1957, p 234; P. Floud 'Richard Ovey and the rise of the London 'Furniture-Printers'', The Connoisseur, Oct. 1957, p 92.

about the same time a carrier was employed by another merchant to take his cloth to the fairs of southern England.¹⁹

During the following century the use of carriers seems to have become more general. The growth of trade in Manchester brought with it changes of organisation. Instead of searching for sales of raw materials, merchants sent out travellers with samples, while they themselves stayed at home to supervise the manufacture of orders which came in. Aikin's²⁰ description of these changes seems to imply that the merchants employed carriers to transport their goods. This was certainly the case in the woollen trade of the West Riding.

"...Several considerable traders in Leeds used to go with droves of pack-horses, loaded with these goods, to all the fairs and market towns almost over the whole island, not to sell by retale (sic), but to the shops by wholesale... But of late they only travel for orders, and afterwards send the goods, by the common carriers, to the different places intended." 21

Although there are many examples of the employment of individual carriers, there is much less evidence to illustrate the type of change in entrepreneurial function suggested here. These two references date from the first half of the eighteenth century, but the likelihood is that the tendency which they indicate became more pronounced with time.

19 Wadsworth and Mann Op.cit. p 31, p 46.

20 Aikin Description of the country...round Manchester p 183; see chap. 2 p

21 Defoe Tour through the whole island, Vol. iii, p 126.

II. The Pickfords

These, then, were the conditions within which carriers could operate in the eighteenth century. How successful were the Pickfords in exploiting them? The growth of services by the time of Matthew Pickford's death in 1799 has already been seen. But how far is it possible to assess Pickfords' performance during the previous fifty or so years against that of other Manchester carriers? No significant detail is known about other concerns, but one test that can be applied is the survival rate of the various firms.

Between 1750 and 1800, there were at least eighteen²² different firms engaged in road haulage work at various times between Manchester and London. Some of these appear in no more than a single reference. Some, for example, Thomas Sleath & Co.²³ lasted only a few years. Yet others survived over lengthy periods. There were ten signatories to the joint advertisement put out by the Manchester and London carriers in September 1765.²⁴ Of these only four signed the second advertisement two years later²⁵ to which were added three new names. The other six had not necessarily ceased to function, however, since later evidence affirms the existence of two of them. None the less, the impression is that, particularly at this early stage and to a considerable

22 On the evidence of the Manchester newspapers and trade directories.

23 Advertisements in the Manchester Mercury 30 Aug. 1796, 14 Feb. 22 Aug. 1797, 29 May 1798 chronicle Sleath's career with some accuracy.

24 Manchester Mercury 24 Sept. 1765.

25 Ibid 1 Dec. 1767.

extent later, the trade was characterised by frequent entry and drop-out. By about 1775, the trade had settled down, and was in the hands of only four firms, Pickfords, Bass & Co., Cooper & Co., and Hulse & Co.

The firm of Bass & Co. was founded by William Bass of Burton-on-Trent, later better known for the beer he brewed.²⁶ Bass probably started off as local carrier, by tradition making delivery for local brewers, but by 1762, he was engaged in the Manchester and London trade and signed the two joint advertisements. He took up brewing himself in 1777, but the London and Manchester trade directories show that he retained an interest in carrying, in the partnership of Bass & Morris, until about 1795. Thomas Cooper & Co.²⁷ was a later arrival. The first mention of this firm is in 1772 although it might have already been in operation for some years. It lasted a comparatively short time, disappearing probably in 1789. The last of the four, Hulse & Co., was the only firm other than Pickfords' which survived to the end of the century, albeit in a modified form. Hulse & Co. was a partnership of three families, Hulse, Widders and Higginson, of whom the first two were perhaps the more important. By 1765 the firm was listed in the joint advertisement as Hulse, Widders & Co., and in 1767 as William Widders & Co. From then on it was known as Hulse & Co. until 1794 when the partnership was re-formed as Higginson, Twiss & Co., under which name it continued for some years into the

26 Details of William Bass are from Fortunes made in Business (N.D.? 1884) p 121 ff; C.G.Harper The Manchester and Glasgow Road (London and Manchester 1907, 2nd revised ed. 1924) p 229; Wood 'Trade and transport on the river Trent' Thoroton Society, 1950, p 23.

27 Information on Cooper & Co., and Hulse & Co. is from the Manchester newspapers and trade directories.

nineteenth century.

Against this background, the simple fact of Pickfords' continued existence emerges as a factor of some consequence. While most other concerns fell away or left the trade, Pickfords were one of only two firms to survive throughout the years under discussion. There is also a further criterion which distinguishes Pickfords from Hulse & Co. and its descendant. While Higginson, Twiss & Co. were content to remain as road hauliers, Pickfords moved on to the canals, a lead which no other land carrier in Manchester followed before 1800. In fact in 1800, there were only three carrying firms working by canal from Manchester and both the other two²⁸ commenced business specifically as canal carriers. During the first twenty years of the nineteenth century the number of canal carriers in Manchester expanded considerably, but again nearly all of them appear to have been new firms. Not until approximately 1813 did Higginson, Twiss & Co. follow Pickfords' example and adopt canal working.

What problems underlay survival in the carrying trade, and what qualities were necessary to solve them? If, in the early stages of industrialisation, it was necessary for the industrial entrepreneur to have 'managerial abilities and, above all, the ability to command and organise.'²⁹ the direction of a carrying concern would seem to require no less capabilities. Long-distance carrying had its own range

28 Henshall & Co., and Worthington & Gilbert.

29 B.F.Hoselitz 'Main concepts in the analysis of the social implications of technical change' in Industrialisation and Society, p 23, quoted by S.Pollard The genesis of modern management (1965) pp 4-5.

of problems. Organising abilities were necessary to ensure regular services and a constant flow of traffic. More difficult was the problem of supervision. Unlike the manufacturer, the owner of a carrying concern could not be at hand to control all parts of the business. Operating over considerable distances, much of the day-to-day running was inevitable beyond his immediate control. As long as the business was focused on one chief centre the owner could probably achieve a substantial degree of overall supervision and success or failure would depend primarily on his own efforts and abilities. But success could bring its own problems particularly in the form of expansion and the establishment of subsidiary bases along the road. Each new depot would need its complement of staff and thereby reduce the self-sufficiency of the owner. Continued success would now depend on more than his own efforts. He would need to build up an efficient organisation, and be able to pick out reliable men to operate it at the local level.

Pickfords development possibly took the following lines. In the early days the waggons operated between Manchester and London without a permanent base in either place. Both James and Matthew Pickford would be able to maintain a fair degree of personal supervision from Poynton. This position began to change when premises were taken in Manchester from the late 1780s and in London in 1794. The development of the Castle Inn as a London headquarters marked an important change. As the collection and delivery of goods was evidently now undertaken in London general as well as supervisory staff would be required.³⁰ The leasing of warehouses

30 See the evidence of William Wright, quoted below.

at Braunston and Coventry would add further to the need for local staff while the transshipment of goods at Blisworth presented problems of its own. Reliable staff would be necessary to safeguard against inefficiency and to secure maximum advantage from the new opportunities of the canal trade.

Overall supervision was achieved by a division of responsibility. Matthew Pickford looked after the Manchester end of the business, leaving his brother Thomas to supervise the London end. The management of local bases could be organised in various ways. A depot might be contracted out for a given share of the profits. Alternatively, complete control could be maintained by employing staff direct and paying a salary. A third possibility would combine these two, that is, to pay various forms of bonuses, so that a local superintendent would have a vested interest in his depot's success. In days of only postal communication and when travelling was so unpleasant as to render regular personal supervision extremely arduous, this last policy had a lot to recommend it. This type of solution seems to have been adopted in London. One of Pickfords' employees in London, William Wright, recalled that

" A Mr. Meakin found Porters, labour, had all the Bookings and Porterages...and in addition to these charges he had a percentage.. Mr. Pickford from Market Street would frequently drive up, but seldom staid (sic) long.. his sons would come on Monday, return on Saturday." 31

31 William Wright, Junior to Joseph Baxendale 25 May 1852. KS/3/5(b). See also chap. 3 note 64 . Some elements of Wright's statement might seem to imply that the Castle had been contracted out. The interpretation adopted is because the position of Thomas Pickford and his sons would seem to argue against this.

Perhaps the same method was also applied elsewhere.

However, these problems were at least adequately solved. For Pickfords not only survived but expanded. The development of the road haulage business, the flirtation with coaching, the use of canals, all of these suggest a degree of enterprise which kept Pickfords in the forefront of advance. The tendency to write in terms of Matthew Pickford alone, to credit him with these signs of enterprise, is to overlook any part his brother Thomas might have had. It is not known precisely when Thomas Pickford became a partner in the business and settled in London.³² The logic of his presence in London is that Thomas acted in a supervisory capacity. But if Wright's comments on the 1790s truly reflected Thomas's general attention to business, his effective supervision may have been somewhat limited. In March 1799 the partnership was extended to take in certain relations by marriage.³³

In terms of personal details Matthew Pickford is no more substantial a figure than his brother. Throughout the period

32 Harper Stage coach and mail, Vol. ii, p 126, says that when he was writing (published 1903), a bill-head of 1780 was still preserved which showed the two brothers as partners. This no longer survives. An unidentified piece of paper in the King Sterndale papers, KS/7/1, contains the following entries:-

1770 Thomas Pickford, Wagoner of Poynton, and Margaret Worall of Adlington, 3 July (Their marriage)

1781 Margaret, Wife of Thomas Pickford, Islington, Oct. 11 age 32 years (Her death)

However, Margaret Worrall was buried in Prestbury Churchyard, Cheshire, with the other Pickfords, as 'Margaret, Wife to Thomas Pickford of Adlington.' Pickfords' entry in the Manchester directory for 1781 shows a Thomas Pickford as book-keeper to Pickfords' waggons in London.

The Universal British directory 1790, Vol. 1 p 479 mentions 'Pickford & Co.' which implies some form of partnership.

33 Reference back is made to this in Partnership Agreement 1 Oct. 1800 CHP/7.

all advertisements and similar references to the firm appear in Matthew's name alone. The flirtation with coaching was exclusively his, and the first approaches to the Coventry, Oxford and Grand Junction canals are recorded in his name. The case for regarding Matthew Pickford as the main driving force behind this stage of Pickfords' development rests on this evidence.

It is easier to shed light on the development of Pickfords' road haulage business than the nature of the traffic handled. As carriers for Peter Stubbs, Pickfords delivered files "to customers in all parts of the kingdom", chiefly by waggon.³⁴ Pickfords also carried Samuel Oldknow's muslins to London by road.³⁵ (Two return loads contained four bags of Barbados cotton wool, 574lbs in weight, and a "piano-forte packed up very carefully"). In the early months of 1786 Pickfords' waggons were bringing from Salte regular consignments of £200 cash. In general it seems that Pickfords carried whatever required transportation; a chest of tea, a pack of goods, some deal timber, twenty-two pieces of printed cloth were all items stolen from Pickfords' waggons in 1798 and 1799.³⁶ Just a few years later when one of Pickfords' drivers attempted to force a passage through a flooded section of road at Stony Stratford, the waggon-load disappeared under the water, together with its driver and horses; it contained "besides various hosiery and other goods a ton of cutlery from Sheffield".³⁷

34 Ashton Peter Stubbs p 91

35 Unwin Samuel Oldknow and the Arkwrights espec. Chaps. iv and v.

36 Extracts in the Manchester Mercury of these years from the reports of the 'Society for Prosecution of Felons and Receivers of Stolen Goods.'

37 Gentleman's Magazine Vol. LXXXIX (1809) p 81.

During Matthew Pickford's lifetime the business expanded substantially. He inherited only six waggons and fifty four horses. At the end of his life the business was on a much larger scale. No estimate of the capital stock can be made for 1799 but a few years later, in 1803, as a patriotic gesture at the time of Napoleon's threatened invasion, Pickfords offered the Government the use of 400 horses, 50 waggons and 28 boats.³⁸ This probably represented the capital stock much as Matthew left it, and is an indication of the expansion which had taken place during his lifetime.³⁹

Not only did the business increase, it also seems to have been prosperous. It presumably provided the resources from which Thomas Pickford bought an estate at Market Street, Flamstead, Hertfordshire, in 1790, for £2,400. He was able to make a marriage settlement of £5,000 in favour of his eldest son James and to leave two separate legacies in his will of £1,000 each.⁴⁰ Matthew Pickford shared the gains⁴¹

38 Manchester Mercury, 12 July 1803. There are multiple references to this event. Similar offers were made by canal companies and others. T.Baines History of the commerce and town of Liverpool, p 513; C.Hadfield British canals pp 115-116.

39 The only known additions before 1803 were the waggons and horses bought from Robert Clarke of Leicester. See Chap. 5, section 2.

40 Halfpenny Papers, Vol.ii, part ii. I must thank Mr. E. Halfpenny for the use of these papers. Few further details of Thomas Pickford's life are known. He held shares in the Worcester & Birmingham canal (1791), and the Monmouthshire canal (1799). He was also active in the promotion of the Grand Union canal. I owe this information to Mr. C.Hadfield. Thomas Pickford ceased to have anything to do with the carrying business in 1800 and died in 1811. His obituary in the Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. LXXXI (1811) Part ii, p 294, spoke of him as "a man of the greatest liberality and strict integrity; an affectionate father, a generous friend, a useful agriculturist; and maintained throughout life an unshaken loyalty and attachment to the constitution of his country both in Church and State."

41 It was probably in the 1790s that King Sterndale Hall, Near Buxton, Derbyshire was bought. Originally a holiday house, it became the family home.

and advanced up the social ladder. Born a 'yeoman,' he died a 'gentleman.' The seal to a successful career was set posthumously in June 1805, by a grant of arms to Matthew's three children and surviving brother Thomas, which featured the carrier's horses and carrier's wheel and motto 'Celeriter.' In his lifetime Matthew Pickford achieved for himself a notable position in the country's carrying trade, and he died in August, 1799, "one of the most extensive proprietors of the carrying business in the kingdom."⁴²

⁴² Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. LXIX, (1799) p 815, The Manchester Mercury, 13 Aug. and the Derby Mercury, 15 Aug. also reported his death. He is buried in Prestbury churchyard, Cheshire.

CHAPTER 5.

YEARS OF PROMISE AND FAILURE 1800-1817.

1. An outline of the business

After the death of Matthew Pickford the remaining parties to the partnership agreement of March 1799 continued to run the business for a few months. Then in October 1800 a new partnership^{was} formed.¹ Thomas Pickford, brother of the deceased Matthew, retired and was replaced by his sons James and Matthew II. The sons of the late Matthew Pickford also took their father's place. Matthew's elder son, Thomas II, became a partner immediately, and provision was made for the younger boy Matthew III, then aged 17. The other parties to the previous agreement, Jonathan Higginson and the three Vaux brothers, continued as partners for the time being. So within a few months there was a complete change in the ownership and management of the business.

The main provisions of the partnership agreement followed the customary form at the time.² The capital was divided into the following shares: Thomas Pickford II was to have nine shares, James and Matthew Pickford II four and a half shares each, Higginson three shares, and the three Vaux one share each. The partnership was to last until 1805 when Matthew III would come of age. If he should die earlier, the partnership was to die with him.

The name of the firm was to be Thomas and James Pickford and Company.³ It was to appear on all boats and waggons used

1 Partnership Agreement, 1 Oct. 1800 CHP/7.

2 For comparison see the Carron partnership agreements of 1759 and 1773, Campbell, Carron Company, p 21 ff; also the Hollins-Oldknow partnership 1785, Pigott Hollins pp 32-34.

3 In fact the name by which the firm was known varied greatly. The London directories tended to use 'M. & J. Pickford,' the Manchester directories, after 1805, 'T. & M. & J. & M. Pickford,' but almost every possible variation was used at different times.

and on all bills drawn in the course of trade. Proper accounts were to be kept of all aspects of the business and a record of all money handled was to be entered into the appropriate books. Each partner had the right of access to accounts and books at all times. On the expiry of the partnership the accounts were to be settled within three months and the appropriate shareout made. All rents, taxes, wages, debts were to be paid out of the joint stock and the gain and profits therefrom." The partners were to settle any deficiency, in due proportion, out of their personal estates.

Measures were taken to protect the firm's interests against individual partners. No partner was to use the firm's assets or credit for his own purposes or, except for Jonathan Higginson, to engage in the carrying trade either individually or with another. In the event of this stipulation being infringed, the partnership was entitled to take any profits so made, but all losses would have to be sustained by the person concerned. Similarly, when security was needed for any interest-bearing loan used in the business, the written consent of all the partners was required. The full onus of responsibility rested with any partner proceeding unilaterally. The partners were expected to be "honest and faithful to the others in all their business accounts and to take their fair share and concern for the business according to their shares."

Particular posts in the business were specified for certain of the partners. James Vaux retained the position he already held as 'Principal Clerk and Cash Keeper' at the

Manchester warehouse, where he would perform 'all lawful and reasonable orders of Thomas Pickford II for carrying on the business in Manchester.' For this Vaux drew a salary of £200, plus profits, and could be discharged only with the written consent of the majority of the partners. James Pickford, at a salary of £300, plus profits, filled the same position in London. They were to assure, as the agreement required, that monthly balances were drawn up in Manchester and London, and the profits distributed. Matthew Pickford II was to be clerk to James in London at a stipend of £200.

Provision was made for the re-allocation of shares should any partner die or wish to retire from the business. In the latter case, six months notice had to be given to each partner, after which a final account would be drawn up and the appropriate division made. Lastly, provision was made for the arbitration of any disputes.

The death of Matthew Pickford, so soon followed by the retirement of his brother Thomas, meant the loss to the firm of much of its practical experience. From October 1800 Pickfords essentially had new managers as well as new owners. Not that practical knowledge was totally lacking. James and Matthew Pickford II must have gained some benefit from their years at the Castle.⁴ How long they had worked in London is unknown but they were clearly regarded to be sufficiently

⁴ See Wright's evidence, Chap. 4 p107

familiar with the business to be able to take their father's place. What Thomas and later Matthew Pickford III could contribute to the management of the business is also unknown. The partnership agreement seems to imply that James Vaux was to act for Thomas Pickford II in Manchester, in which case Thomas's personal involvement might have been limited. Virtually nothing is known of James Vaux prior to his inclusion in the previous partnership.⁵ If his working knowledge of the carrying trade extended only to the eighteen months of the previous partnership, he could scarcely have borne the main responsibility. Jonathan Higginson, a carrier of long standing, emerges as the most experienced man among the partners.⁶ He, however, had other demands on his time. Making use of the exemption allowed him, he not only kept on his own business of Higginson, Twiss & Co., but continued vigorously in business even after the partnership with Twiss was dissolved in 1813.⁷ Although it is unknown

- 5 Matthew Pickford's sister Mary had married a John Vaux in 1766 and there was a son, James, to this marriage who received a legacy of £5 in Martha Pickford's will. A James Vaux was a sponsor at the christening of Matthew Pickford III in 1784. It is not clear whether this is the same James Vaux and indeed whether the John and James Vaux of the partnership are the same as these two. It is more than likely that the James Vaux of the partnership, who became principal clerk in Manchester, was the son of John Vaux and Mary Pickford. But whether the other two Vaux, John and Thomas were his father and/or brother or cousin cannot be determined.
- 6 Some difficulty arises over the person of Jonathan Higginson. The earliest knowledge of him is his signature to an advertisement of Hulse & Co., Manchester Mercury, 25 Oct. 1768, and the name continues to appear until at least 1817. Is this the same man throughout, or was there a son of the same name, who perhaps joined the partnership when it was reformed in 1795 as Higginson, Twiss & Co? It could have been the same man. Assuming Higginson was at least 21 in 1768, he would have been 70 in 1817. This consideration is important because it materially affects the degree of experience embodied in the partners. It is assumed here that it was the same man throughout.
- 7 Dissolution of partnership, Manchester Mercury, 29 June, 1813; Ibid 16 April 1816 Higginson advertised fly-boats to London. He is last mentioned in the Manchester directory for 1817, and presumably died or left the trade before 1819 when the next directory appeared.

just when Higginson retired from Pickfords, it is possible that the firm did not receive a great deal of his attention. All in all, therefore, the new partnership might well have been relatively short of experienced management, a factor which would help to explain later failures.

Initially the business seems to have done well and considerable expansion took place. In road haulage there were two important developments. First the carrying concern belonging to Robert Clarke of Leicester was purchased, a substantial increase in Pickfords' capital stock. The service operated by the newly purchased waggons lay between Sheffield, Leicester and London, an area not previously covered by Pickfords. Secondly, a few years later, Pickfords moved into a new era in road transport, with the introduction of 'fly-vans.' These were vehicles, built on similar lines to those of stage-coaches, which completed the journey between Manchester and London in thirty-six hours compared with four days or so by waggon. Canal conveyance progressed steadily, if less spectacularly, as canal facilities continued to be adopted. It was the growth of the canal trade which underlay Pickfords' expansion during the period.

William Wright remembered these years.

"1801. Canal open to Paddington: first boat loaded... with cotton... Warehouse soon finished and House built. Within six months Stable built. One Horse and Cart placed for West End: business increases - a second cart placed - deliver all West of Fleet Market.. 1804. A Second warehouse built: horses increased at Paddington. 1807-8. The next wharf taken...Trade increases..."⁸

The impression is that of steady growth and successful business. The larger volume of traffic was handled with regularity and

general competence, sufficient to draw favourable comment from one contemporary writer.

"Mr. Pickford has a great number of boats, which proceed as regularly day and night upon this canal (Grand Junction) and the other canals north of it, as the mail coaches do on the roads, although with less expedition...(the boats) arrive in London with as much punctuality from the midlands and some of the most distant parts of the Kingdom, as the waggon do." 9

The extension of road and canal services demanded extra accommodation. In 1800 the property made over to the new partners included premises in Macclesfield, Stoke, Blisworth and Brentford, as well as those in Manchester and London. Wharfs and warehouses leased from the canal companies would also be required. As the number of towns in which Pickfords operated from permanent premises increased, there would be a proportionate investment outlay. Table 5.1 illustrates this aspect of Pickfords' growth.

Each column gives only a partial picture. Each has obvious omissions¹⁰ and most of the evidence refers to northern towns only. Even so, allowing for variations in recording, the table provides a general indication in physical terms of the growth of the business.

However, it was not long before signs of stress began to appear. Pickfords faced growing competition after 1800.

9 A. Rees The Cyclopaedia: or universal dictionary of arts, sciences and literature (1819-20), Vol. VI, article on canals, written in 1805.

10 No mention is made of Leicester until 1818 and Nottingham at all where Pickfords are known to have had premises before 1805. Also there is no reason why Macclesfield should be omitted in column 2, and Sheffield in columns 3 and 4.

Table 5.1 Towns from which Pickfords' services are
 recorded, 1805-1818

<u>1805-7</u>	<u>1814-15</u>	<u>1816-17</u>	<u>1818</u>
Coventry	Halifax	Birmingham	Birmingham
Derby	Leek	Halifax	Coventry
Hinckley	Liverpool	Leek	Derby
Macclesfield	Manchester	Liverpool	Halifax
Manchester	Rochdale	Macclesfield	Leek
Sheffield	Sheffield	Manchester	Leicester
Wigan	Wigan	Stockport	Liverpool
		Wigan	Macclesfield
		Wolverhampton	Manchester
			Stockport
			Wigan
			Wolverhampton

Source	Col. 1	Holden's triennial directory (London) 1805-7, Vol.2.
	Col. 2	Commercial directory (Pigot) of the North, 1814-15.
	Col. 3	Commercial directory (Pigot) of the North, 1816-17.
	Col. 4	Commercial directory (Pigot) of the North, 1818.

as the supply of road and particularly canal services increased. In Manchester alone the number of canal carriers grew rapidly. By 1800 William Bache & Co. of Coventry had begun business there,¹¹ to be followed by many others. In 1813 there were seventeen canal carriers in Manchester, of whom five or six catered for the Midlands and London trade. The continual growth of output and trade and the consequently increased volume of traffic was favourable to the emergence of a number of small firms alongside the very few large concerns. Although one of the larger concerns, Pickfords was still vulnerable to the competition of these newcomers especially if slackness or inefficiency of working appeared. In a situation of more traffic to be carried, more complex traffic flows to be organised and more depots to be supervised, close attention to business was of crucial importance. If the chaotic situation later discovered at Birmingham¹² was in any way typical, there was certainly a failure to maintain a close watch over local working.

There is clear evidence that by 1815 Pickfords was in serious financial difficulties. Property at Paddington was mortgaged to secure debts to the Grand Junction company which in 1816 stood at £14,000. The business was being drained of capital. It is not known when or ^{on} what terms Higginson and the three Vaux left the partnership, except that £8,000, the balance of £18,000, was still owing to James Vaux after 1817.

11 This firm apparently began trading on the canals in 1797 Jopsom's Coventry Mercury, 7 Aug. 1797

12 See below Chap. 6 p151 ff.

In addition, in May 1816, James and Matthew Pickford II retired, taking with them their joint capital of £25,900. Neither the condition of the business nor the personal fortunes of the remaining two Pickford brothers were sufficient to pay them off. They had little option but to find fresh capital. New partners were taken in, commencing from 1 April 1817. From that date, the Pickfords began to lose control of the family firm.

2 Road transport

For a short time after Matthew Pickford's death an interest in the coaching trade was continued. Between October 1802 and June 1803 a continuous run of advertisements by 'Paterson, Pickford & Co.' appeared in the Manchester Mercury for the 'Cornwallis' coach to London.¹³ Departing every day except Saturday, the coach, "well lighted and guarded and out one night only" took a different route out of Manchester on alternate days. One day it went by way of Buxton, and by way of Macclesfield and Leek the next. After 1806 there is no mention made of Pickfords in such advertisements: this marks the end of Pickfords' association with the passenger side of road transport, well before the great era of the coaching trade.

The purchase of another road carrying business, that of Robert Clarke of Leicester, brought a number of important results. The stock in trade acquired comprised 14 broad wheel waggons,¹⁴ 2 narrow-wheel waggons, and 136 "capital

13 Manchester Mercury, 19 Oct. 1802 to 21 June 1803, Wheeler's Manchester Chronicle 22 Jan. 1803, Pic. 4/1; also Derby Mercury 22 May 1806.

14 Advertisement for the sale of Clarke's business, Leicester Journal 6 Sept. 1793, quoted by Copeland Roads and their traffic, p 76

seasoned horses all in full work." Clarke had carried from Leicester to London, Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield, although his major work seems to have been on the line of Sheffield, Leicester and London.¹⁵ This was new territory for Pickfords and a useful complement to the existing waggon services. Pickfords also bought Clarke's warehouses and stables in Sheffield and Leicester, and the use of his working arrangements along the road. Clarke's base had been at Leicester where he had quite extensive premises, including a wheelwright's shop and a blacksmith's shop.¹⁶ These were a particularly useful acquisition, and Leicester became an important centre of Pickfords organisation. The new commitment in the east Midlands was extended to include Nottingham. An agreement of May 1803 with Robert Mackley, landlord of the Black Boy, in Long Row, Nottingham stated that Pickfords had recently built on adjoining land "a warehouse and buildings at a considerable expense..to receive and deposit their goods therein as necessary."¹⁷ Pickfords now offered much more comprehensive road haulage facilities from London to the north of England.

The date of these purchases is uncertain. Clarke had offered his business for sale as early as September 1793,¹⁸ but he clearly did not find a buyer. By the beginning of 1802, however, Pickfords had taken over and were running Clarke's waggons in their own name. In the February, Leicester traders were informed that T.&.J.Pickford & Co.'s fly waggons "precisely the same as to time and warehouses at the different towns, as

15 R. Weston The Leicester directory 1794. I must thank Dr. T. Gourvish for this and other references concerning Pickfords' activities in Leicester.

16 Bond between the Clarkes and the Pickfords CHP/8.

17 CHP/11.

18 Copeland Op.cit. p 76

their predecessor Mr. Robert Clarke" had been moved in London from the White-horse inn in Cripplegate to the White Bear, Basinghall Street.¹⁹ The wording used here would indicate that the take-over had been recent. The following year Robert Clarke and his son entered into a bond for £2000 not to re-enter the trade, or use their influence in anyway against Pickfords in the carrying trade.²⁰

Arrangements were made to bring all the waggons under one working arrangement. Clarke had operated from the White Bear in London and owned substantial property there, including a counting house, two sets of stables, a warehouse and other storage accommodation. In May 1803 Pickfords took them on a lease from Clarke although they had already been using them since the sale.²¹ The Manchester waggons were also moved there from the Castle so that all waggon traffic was operated from the one centre. The White Bear thus became the headquarters in London for all of Pickfords' road carrying.

The integrated running of the waggons outside of London brought Leicester into prominence as a new focal point of Pickfords' road services. The waggons from Manchester had passed through Leicester for many years past and as the newly acquired Sheffield waggons also passed through the town Leicester became an ideal staging point from which to supervise all of Pickfords' road traffic as it came north from London. Leicester, therefore, took on particular significance for Pickfords' organisation and became, with Manchester and London, one of the three places from which the business was controlled.²²

19 Leicester Journal 26 Feb. 1802

20 CHP/8 Bond of £2000 25 June 1803

21 CHP/12 Counterpart lease, 25 May 1803

22 This explains why one of the three new partners in 1817 was stationed at Leicester.

The introduction of 'caravans', or 'fly-vans' as they were later called, was an important event. Technically these were a considerable advance in the construction of road haulage vehicles. They were sprung vehicles, much lighter than the conventional waggons, and required only four horses. Their similarity of construction to that of the stage-coach underlay a later description of Pickfords' van as "a large oblong vehicle, like an immense box, on springs, drawn by four horses, with a coachman in front and a guard behind."²³ With fewer horses, the vans were able to achieve much higher speeds than was possible with waggons.

The need for swifter road transport to and from London became more pressing from about 1810.²⁴ The new vehicles were a response to this demand. They were introduced on 6 July 1814, and provided a daily service from London and Manchester, "to leave each place at six o'clock in the evening, and to deliver goods at both places the morning but one after."²⁵ The journey was completed in thirty-six hours. To achieve this the horses travelled at a trotting pace, and, as with the coaches, several relays of horses were used along the road.

But if speeds were higher, so too were charges, perhaps double the waggon rates for the same class of goods. For a pack of goods, which could also go by waggon, the rates were:-

23 J.T.Slugg Reminiscences of Manchester fifty years ago (Manchester and London 1881) p 226.

24 Harper Stage-coach and mail, Vol. I, p 135; Jackman Transportation in modern England, p 309, passes over this development with the barest mention. Improved road surfaces consequent upon the work of Telford and McAdam no doubt were also a significant factor.

25 Manchester Mercury, 5 July 1814; Derby Mercury, 7 July 1814
The notice was dated 1 July.

From Manchester	20/- per cwt.
" Stockport	20/- per cwt.
" Macclesfield	18/8 per cwt.
" Leek	18/8 per cwt.
" Ashbourne	18/8 per cwt.
" Derby	14/- per cwt.
" Loughborough	9/4 per cwt.
" Leicester	9/4 per cwt.
" Northampton	9/4 per cwt.

The only comparison between these and waggon rates which can be made is for the towns of Ashbourne and Derby. A few years earlier the justices' assessed rate from these two towns to London was set at 6/- per cwt in summer and 7/6d per cwt in winter.²⁶ On this basis conveyance by van was between two and three times as expensive as that by waggon. These were high charges indeed, but then a highly specialised service was involved.

The van service was intended to cater for a particular class of traffic, that of small parcels. All parcels weighing 14 lbs or under were charged a special rate; above that weight the bulk charges applied. Small parcels between London and Leek, Macclesfield, Stockport or Manchester cost 2/- under six pounds, then 3d per pound up to fourteen pounds. There was also a booking fee of 2d per parcel. The delivery of parcels was free of further charge, but there was no collection service; parcels had to be taken to the warehouse by the consignors.

²⁶ Derby Mercury, 7 May 1801, 5 May 1803; also chap. 7.

The terms of responsibility were also clearly laid down. Full responsibility was accepted for goods in transit but additional charges were made for items which contained a high element of risk.

This new business brought in considerable profits²⁷ and the vans themselves became a familiar sight on England's roads.

3 Canal transport

Between 1800 and 1817 Pickfords' canal carrying business expanded considerably. Several new canals were opened after 1800, two of which were the Warwick & Birmingham and the Warwick & Napton canals. These were end-on canals. Their managements were closely linked and both were stimulated, as branch or feeder lines, by the building of the Grand Junction canal. Both were formally opened on 19 December 1799, but full trading did not start until March 1800.²⁸ Although there is some evidence that Pickfords used both the Warwick canals in 1801,²⁹ any extensive use was delayed until ten years later. In July 1811 Pickfords gave notice to the Warwick & Napton committee of their intention to commence trading over that canal, provided their boats received the same facilities as on other canals used. The company was only too happy to agree. It commented "that this committee are of the opinion such an establishment will be very advantageous to this canal and that they will afford every means of dispatch that can with safety to the canal be given thereto." The Warwick &

27 See chap. 7.

28 Hadfield Canals of east Midlands, p 163 ff.

29 Two letters of 5 April 1801 imply that Pickfords was using them. WBC 4/1 Letter Book, 1799-1801.

Birmingham company was asked for its concurrence and assistance which was readily forthcoming. Pickfords then approached the Warwick & Birmingham committee with a request for premises at Digbeth junction. The required facilities were discussed in some detail. In addition to a wharf, warehouse and stables, a small house was built, to which was later added a piece of garden, for Pickfords' local agent there. These premises cost the canal company about £1500 to build, and were let to Pickfords at a rent of £130 p.a., that is $7\frac{1}{2}\%$ of the cost.³¹

Pickfords also applied to the Worcester & Birmingham canal company before the canal was properly open for traffic. The committee received Pickfords' application in July 1814 and agreed to supply the requested accommodation, a wharf and warehouse at the canal basin at Lowesmere near Worcester. The canal was open over its whole length from the beginning of the December.³²

The main direction of Pickfords' canal traffic, as with the roads, was to and from London. In 1800 Pickfords operated a daily fly-boat service from Manchester to London although, as already seen, traffic was apparently not conveyed all the way to London by canal until the Blisworth tunnel had been completed in 1805.³³ Fly-boat services to London were also

31 Warwick & Birmingham canal company minutes, 12 Aug., 14 Oct., 11, 13 Nov., 9 Dec 1811; 13 Jan., 9 March 1812. WBC 1/9. This seems to have been the customary rate of interest charged.

32 Worcester & Birmingham canal company minutes 28 July 1815, 3 July, 30 Aug., 1816, WOBC 1/6; 14 Feb. 1817, WOBC 1/7. Pickfords' rent was $7\frac{1}{2}\%$ of the cost of constructing the premises.

33 Manchester trade directories 1800 and 1804.

introduced from other towns. By September 1801 a service had been started from Derby. Boats departed two afternoons a week, and picked up goods en route at Horninglow, Fazeley, Atherstone and Nuneaton.³⁴ Soon after this Pickfords began to operate from Birmingham.³⁵ Some time between 1803 and 1806 Pickfords acquired the premises, possibly the business too, of the Birmingham Boat company. Fly-boats were dispatched daily, "with or without loading" to Pickfords' wharf and warehouses at Paddington. A point of interest is that in Birmingham Pickfords undertook collection and delivery services; customers were normally expected to take their goods to the carrier's warehouse.

The journey between London and Birmingham by fly-boat took four days in 1806. The journey to Manchester took seven days but this was later reduced to five. Pickfords came to specialise in the fly-boat trade, which catered for the lighter, merchandise traffic, but there is evidence that for a time at least the firm had an interest in the slower or 'tramp' trade-boats which stopped anywhere along the way. Pickfords were operating some boats of this type from Derby to London in 1801 and 1802,³⁶ although there is no sign of them elsewhere. They were stated to serve a whole host of towns along the way. Goods carried by these boats were charged at a lower rate but were consigned to the Grand Junction company's wharf at White Friars, on the Thames, and not to Pickfords' own canal headquarters at Paddington.³⁷

³⁴ Derby Mercury, 17 Sept, 8 Oct, 1801, 4 March 1802

³⁵ For Birmingham, Birmingham Commercial Herald 21 April 1806; Aris' Birmingham Gazette 9 Nov. 1807, 22 Feb. 1808; Chapman's Birmingham directory 1803 p 140; Thomson & Wrightson's triennial directory of Birmingham, 1808 p 152. Pickfords' services do not appear in the 1803 directory but by 1806 the firm had acquired the wharf which formerly belonged to the Burton Boat company.

³⁶ Derby Mercury, 17 Sep. 1801, 4 March 1802

³⁷ Pickfords leased number 1 and 2 wharfs at Paddington; Minutes of general assembly of proprietors and general committee 5 May 1801 GJC 1/40.

Pickfords' main canal traffic continued to be that between London, the midlands and Lancashire, but during these years some cross-country traffic was superimposed on this north-south pattern. From 1800 Pickfords operated a daily canal service along the Bridgewater canal between Manchester and Liverpool.³⁸ Some years later, after the opening of the Grand Union canal had linked Leicester directly to the main canal network, a service was introduced between that town and Birmingham. A pair of boats left Birmingham every Thursday afternoon and travelled to Leicester by a round-about route, via Warwick, Banbury and Oxford and arrived at their destination the next Monday. They returned the same day and completed the round trip on the Thursday morning, ready to start off from Birmingham again the same afternoon.³⁹

Before the Grand Union canal was built goods were conveyed by Pickfords to Leicester by an integrated road and canal service.⁴⁰ The initial intention had been to carry goods for Leicester and district by canal to Brownsover wharf near Rugby on the Oxford canal, and thence by waggon to Leicester. The building of the Ashby-de-la-Zouch canal offered a shorter road

38 Manchester and Salford directory (Bancks) 1800 p 236
Pickfords first appeared in Gore's Liverpool directories in 1803, but was not included in the list of canal carriers until 1811.

39 Aris' Birmingham Gazette 28 Nov. 1814. I owe this reference to Mr. C. Hadfield;

40 See A.T.Patterson. Radical Leicester, a history of Leicester 1780-1850 (Univ. College, Leicester 1954) pp 37-8;
A.T.Patterson 'The making of the Leicestershire canals 1766-1814' Transaction of the Leicester Archaeological Society Vol. XXVII (1951) T.J.Chandler 'The canals of Leicestershire, their development and trade' The east Midlands Geographer No. 10 1958; also Wrightson's new triennial directory of Birmingham 1815 p 193.

haul and the canal committee successfully sought to attract Pickfords' traffic. The committee decided to ask "Mr. Pickford to consider whether he might not advantageously to himself and the public in his proposed carriage of goods to and from Leicester adopt as a depot or meeting place for boats and waggons out of the following three places on the Ashby canal... as it appears to the committee that one of these three places will be a very advantageous meeting place in the carriage of such goods."⁴¹ This was two years before the canal was opened and says something of the value of Pickfords' traffic. Hinckley was chosen as the point of trans-shipment and the Oxford and Coventry canal companies agreed to help the trade along by co-operating in a toll reduction on all groceries conveyed between London and Leicester.⁴²

An indication of the growth of Pickfords' canal traffic is given by the firm's tonnage payments to the Coventry canal company from 1802 to 1807.

Table 5.2 Pickfords' tonnage payments to the Coventry canal company in half-years, 1802-1807

	<u>31 Aug-28 Feb</u>		<u>28 Feb-31 Aug</u>
1802-3	£821. 9. 5.	1803	£807. 19. 0.
1803-4	£625. 7. 5.	1804	£1618. 14. 2.
1804-5	£1384. 8. 4½	1805	£1586. 0. 3.
1805-6	£1794.16. 2.	1806	£2146. 12. 1.
1806-7	£2506. 4. 9.	1807	£2170. 13.11.

Source: Memorandum Book 1802-1808 CVC 4/156

41. Minutes of proprietors and committee 22 Jan.1802,ASHC 1/3

42. Ibid 17 March, 5, 19 April 1802; also minutes of general meetings of committee of proprietors 9 March, 11 May, 1802 CVC 1/27.

During these five years Pickfords' tonnage payments tripled in absolute value, a clear indication of the increasing volume of goods being carries. This same source shows that Pickfords were by far the largest users of the Coventry canal at the time. In the first-half year for which there are figures, other payments recorded were Bache £431. 8. 6d, Henshall & Co. £105. 13. 1d, James Golby of Banbury £41. 15. 6d. Pickfords contributed nearly twice as much as Bache, the second largest.

Predominence of Pickfords over other carriers is also suggested by later evidence. Following the general practice, the Coventry canal company made an extra charge for boats using its canal at night. This could be paid on each boat as the occasion arose, or alternatively traders were allowed to composit the charge and pay an annual sum per boat. On the Coventry canal this cost three guineas. Boats so licenced were allowed to pass without further payment. In January 1810 the licences for the Coventry canal were renewed for the succeeding year. Pickfords licenced 50 boats, Bache 15, Holt & Co. 5, Twiss & Co. 12.⁴³ Assuming these figures reflect the relative trading position of the firms named, Pickfords again emerges as the largest user of the Coventry canal. It is impossible to say, however, whether the same ratios were repeated on other canals.

43 Minutes of general meetings of committee of proprietors
9 Jan. 1810, CVC 1/27.

4 Financial problems and crisis

Towards the end of this period, Pickfords had run into grave financial trouble. Despite the expansion by land and water which has been described, the business was no longer in a healthy state. Pickfords got into difficulties with some canal companies, the Grand Junction company in particular. By 1815, arrears in toll payments were so large that the committee decided that some security was necessary to cover them. Accordingly Pickfords mortgaged to the company all its leases and property at Paddington, the terminus of the Grand Junction, to serve as security up to £15,000. If Pickfords' debts were not settled before the leases expired then all land, properties and equipment would be re-possessed by the canal company without further compensation.⁴⁴

There is no immediately obvious explanation from the general condition of the canal trade why Pickfords' payments position with the Grand Junction canal company should have been so bad in 1815. Pickfords' tonnage payments to the Coventry canal company (Table 5.2) would suggest that at least until 1807 the firm was doing well enough; there is no sign of accounts being overdue. Similarly the volume of canal traffic, as indicated by the profits from toll on the Bridgewater canal, continued to rise through the war years to 1815.⁴⁵ For the Grand Junction canal company, 1814 was a

⁴⁴ Draft and final version of the indentures between Pickfords and the company and proprietors of the Grand Junction canal. CHP/19 and 20; also minutes of general committee, Regents canal company, 20 Sept. 1815 RGC 1/8.

⁴⁵ E. Richards James Loch and the House of Sutherland 1812-1855 (Nottingham University Ph.D.Thesis 1967) Appendix I, p 334; F.C.Mather After the canal Duke, (Oxford 1970) p 359 ff.

particularly good year, with an "unprecedented demand for boats of every description."⁴⁶ On the face of it the years prior to 1815 should have been favourable to the canal carrying trade. From the peace of 1815, however, the canal trade suffered from the depression which affected the economy as a whole. Profits on the Bridgewater canal collapsed while trade on the Grand Junction canal was so depressed that the company introduced temporary toll reductions in an effort to stimulate production. One carrier on the Rochdale canal failed, with debts of £525, and in May 1816, a proposal was made that the company should itself undertake carrying services. There seems to have been no improvement before the spring of 1817 at the earliest.⁴⁷

The post-war trade depression would help to explain why Pickfords' accrued debts proved difficult to shake off. Indeed things got worse rather than better. In 1816 the Grand Junction company grew more insistent for Pickfords' debt to be discharged. In February 1816 the company demanded security from Pickfords to the value of £14,000. Pickfords' account showed that the sum due between then and May for trade to the end of January that year totalled nearly £11,300. Pickfords offered to liquidate the arrears by an immediate payment of £1000 and then four monthly payments of £3000 each. However it seems that this schedule was not maintained for in the September the company demanded an immediate payment of £2000 or the firm's credit would be stopped. Finally in October 1816 the committee ordered that failing the settlement of all arrears

⁴⁶ Hadfield Canals of east Midlands p 121.

⁴⁷ C. Hadfield and G. Biddle The canals of north west England (Newton Abbot 1970) p 281.

or satisfactory security by the 17th of the month, credit to Pickfords would be suspended. A representative from Pickfords attended the next meeting of the committee and asked for the order to be delayed, promising a payment of £4000 before the end of the month. The committee, perhaps pinning its hopes on the information that arrangements were being made "for the better carrying on" of the firm, agreed to defer their order until 1 November.⁴⁸ Pickfords thus gained a breathing space: it is not clear when the company finally got its money, but payments were still being made in the 1820s.

A depression in trade is, however, only a part of the explanation, for Pickfords was also suffering from a severe internal financial crisis. Already overtaxed resources were further strained by a drain of capital from the business.⁴⁹ James Vaux had £18,000 invested in Pickfords, and when he withdrew the Pickfords could only manage to pay him £10,000. The balance remained outstanding for several years. The retirement of the two Pickford brothers in London, James and Matthew II in 1816⁵⁰ was a heavy blow. They took with them their joint capital of £25,900. The two remaining brothers Thomas II and Matthew III Pickford continued alone. They accepted responsibility for the debts owed by the former partnership, but it proved quite beyond their means to liquidate them. A statement of the brothers' joint affairs in October

48 Minutes, meetings of general committee, 29 Feb. 1816, GJC 1/43; Minutes of Board, 11 June, 5, 27 Sept., 10, 17 Oct. 1816; GJC 1/1. Similar debt problems were experienced with the Birmingham canal company, letter of 12 June 1817, BCN 4/373, and with the Grand Union canal company, Committee minutes 7 Jan. 1818, GUC 1/2.

49 Much of the material on which the following is based is published in Halfpenny - 'Pickfords' expansion and crises' Business History, Vol. I. (1959) p 117.

50 The London Gazette, 18 May 1816. The notice is dated 4 April.

1820 revealed an excess of liabilities over assets of some £70,000. The list of creditors did not include the Grand Junction company but other large sums were owed, including over £20,000 to the Macclesfield bankers, Daintry & Ryle. The two brothers eventually came to terms with their creditors, (who still included their two cousins to the full extent of their capital), by paying a composition of ten shillings in the pound. Vaux insisted on the payment of his £8,000 in full.⁵¹

The heavy burden of debt caused Thomas and Matthew Pickford to seek new partners who could bring fresh capital into the business. Their own resources were quite insufficient to restore the business to a healthy state. In the third generation, therefore, the family business faltered. Its fortunes were restored by taking in partners from outside. So ended seventy years of sole ownership by the Pickford family.

51 Letter of Licence between T. & M. Pickford and their Creditors, Pic. 3/1.

CHAPTER 6

A NEW BEGINNING: THE PROGRESS OF THE BUSINESS 1817-1847

The thirty years between 1817 and 1847 contain several crucial developments in Pickfords' history which make them a compact, almost distinct period. The decision in 1817 to bring new blood into the partnership from outside the extended family marked a decisive break with the past, particularly as, following this step, the Pickfords progressively lost control of the business to their new partners. At the time of Thomas Pickford's death in 1846, the family's interest had been reduced to his minority shareholding. With his death, even that residual interest ceased.

By 1847, however, much more than the firm's ownership had been changed: the terms of reference within which future development was to take place had been radically altered. A change for the better had been the restoration of Pickfords' fortunes: the firm had been pulled back from the brink of disaster. By the late 1830s about one hundred and fifty agencies were employed in the business, and Pickfords had come through as the largest carrying firm in the country. The attainment of this position had required a continuous response to changing conditions. The stability of integrated road and canal conveyance, which probably reached its peak in the 1820s was the product of a long period of adaptation. But it was soon to give way to a state of flux, on the advent of the steam locomotive.

Pickfords was ready to make the necessary responses. According to Thomas Pickford, writing in November, 1838. "There is a great change in the carrying business... the heavy waggons

being done away with by the Vans and now the Vans are [done] away with by the Railways and I suppose they will also take a good deal of carriage from the canals ultimately, but we are ready for both or either as may prove best."¹ In the event, however, the new mode of transportation proved inimical to the old system of carrying; in particular it reduced the role of the long-distance goods carriers to that of auxiliary to the railway companies. After a brief but bitter struggle, Pickfords acknowledged its loss of independence. An agency agreement signed with the newly-constituted London & North Western Railway company in 1847 set the conditions of business development for the rest of the century.

In the new partnership of 1 April 1817, Thomas and Matthew Pickford retained between them only a half share of the original family enterprise. The other half was divided in equal portions between their three new partners, Zachary Langton Joseph Baxendale, and Charles Inman.

Who were these men? From where did they draw their capital? How did they come to be connected with Pickfords? Langton, Baxendale and Inman were themselves inter-related both by kinship and business.² Jointly they had access to

1 Thomas Pickford, 15 Nov. 1838, to unknown correspondent. KS/2/1(b).

2 The translation of family connections into business structures is a familiar feature of the business scene of the period. For manufacturing, see D.C.Coleman The British paper industry 1495-1860 (Oxford 1958) p 155 ff., and Chap. IX, passim, esp p 245 ff; for banking G. Chandler Four centuries of Banking Vol.2, pp 20-120.

THE FAMILY RELATIONSHIP OF LANGTON INMAN AND BAXENDALE 1817

JOHN BIRLEY.

b.1710
d.1767.

RICHARD BIRLEY
OF BLACKBURN
b.1743
d.1812

JOHN
b.1746
d.1830

HUGH HORNBY

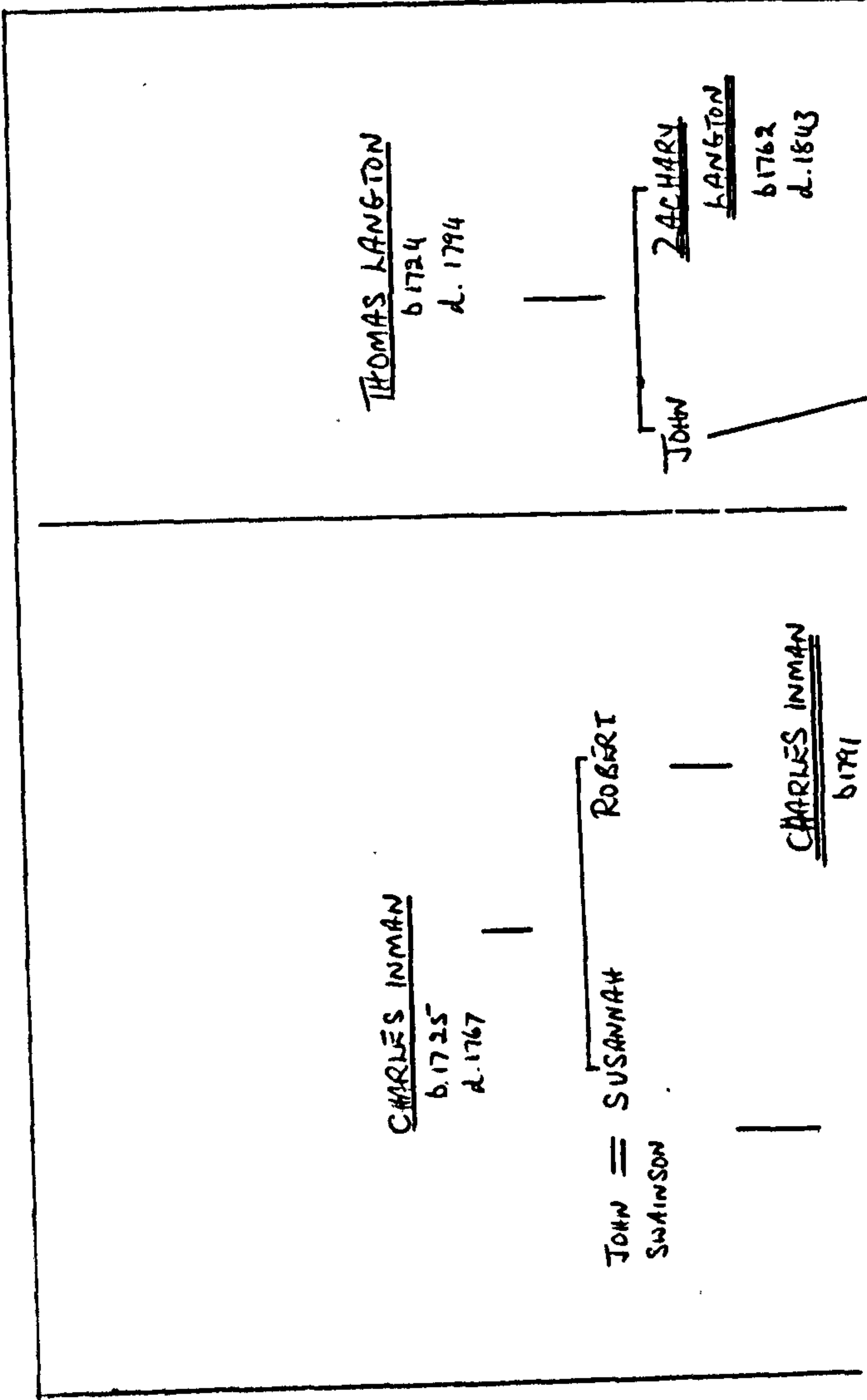
b.1719
d.1786

THOMAS = CECILY
b.1759
d.1834. |
d. of THOMAS LANGTON
OF KIRKHAM.

ALICE

=

JANE = JOSEPH BIRLEY
CECILY = HUGH HORNBY



MARY = JOSEPH BAXENDALE

b.1785
d.1872.

JOSEPH.

HUGH HORNBY = CECILY HORNBY

BIRLEY
b.1778
d.1845

substantial financial resources and enjoyed the support of widely ramifying business and family connections. Zachary Langton, more than twenty years the senior of his two associates, belonged to one of three, by then, wealthy families - The Birleys and the Hornbys were the other two - who had long been closely connected by marriage and a variety of business interests.³ In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries members of all three families had moved into the small town of Kirkham, near Blackpool, and, by way of interlocking partnerships between themselves and established traders, which were invariably reinforced by marriage alliances, soon became absorbed into the local society.⁴ Their mutual business interests, flax-spinning, sail-cloth manufacture, the West India, Russia and Baltic trades, all reflect the temporary prosperity of overseas and coastal shipping, together with allied industries, along that stretch of the Lancashire coast during the second half of the eighteenth century.⁵ So successful were the late-comers that by about the middle of the eighteenth century, they had reached a position of primacy in the local economy and society.

The Langtons were the first of the three families to make their mark. They married into the older Kirkham families and

3 For the succeeding section, reference should be made to the accompanying chart of the several families.

4 See R. Cunliffe Shaw Kirkham in Amounderness. The story of a Lancashire community, (Preston 1949) passim, and esp. p 692 ff; H. Fishwick The history of the parish of Kirkham in the county of Lancaster (Chetham Society Publications, Vol. XCII, 1874); J. Porter History of the Fylde of Lancashire (Fleetwood and Blackpool, 1876) pp 363-401.

5 M.M. Schofield Outlines of an economic history of Lancaster, 1680-1860 (2 parts, 1946, 1951; Transactions of the Lancaster Branch of the Historical Association, Nos. 1 and 2) esp. Part I 1680-1800, Chaps. III-VI.

they were much less heavily inter-married with their business colleagues than the Birleys and Hornbys were with each other. In business, however, the connections were much tighter. The partnership of John Langton, Zachary Langton's grandfather, with John Birley and Thomas Shepherd dated from the early eighteenth century and introduced flax manufacture into Kirkham.⁶ Zachary's father, Thomas Langton, continued the connection, while engaging in the Baltic trade to some extent on his own account. Zachary himself, the third son, pursued an independent course by going off to London where, by about 1786, he was in business in his own name as a dealer in Manchester goods.⁷

Even in London, however, he remained firmly linked, for business purposes, with his Lancashire connections, and retained an interest in the affairs of his home town.⁸

6 Porter Op.cit. p 392

7 It is not known exactly when Zachary Langton began business in London. There is mention of a 'John Langton, Linen Draper, of Cheapside' in Bailey's Western and Midland directory 1783 p 94, who could possibly have been Zachary's elder brother; but if so a family deed of settlement, Shaw Op.cit. p 694, of 1796, following their father's death, would place John back in Kirkham. In the records of Cardwell, Birley & Hornby (John Rylands Library, English MS 1199/1), entries appear in the name of Leigh and Langton in 1785, and in the name of Zachary Langton alone, from 1786 onwards. Bailey's London directory 1790 lists, p 146, 'Langton Zachary, Manchester Warehouse, 63 Bread Street, Cheapside'. See also Universal British directory Vol.I, (1st. ed. 2nd. issue, 1790) p 207.

8 Between 1794 and 1803 regular donations were made to the girls' charity school in Kirkham by 'Mr. Zachary Langton of London', Shaw, Op.cit. pp 542-3. Again, in 1816, Langton joined with his kinswoman Mrs. Mary Bradkirk in investing £320 'in the Navy five percents', the income of which was to be used for the poor people of Kirkham. Porter Op.cit. p 401; Fishwick Op.cit. p 162.

Within a short time, the Langtons seem to have lost their position in Kirkham to the Birley family. The latter, with their multifarious family and business connections over three or four generations, fill a central place in establishing the interlocking pattern of relationships under discussion and explaining the association of the three new members of the Pickford partnership.

John Birley, originally a West India merchant, established the family in the social and industrial structure of Kirkham, but it is his second son, Richard, who is important here. Richard Birley, presumably with his father's money to draw on, moved to Blackburn where, in partnership with Richard Cardwell, he founded an important cotton firm. Marriage ties no doubt eased the way for further finance, the investment in 1784 of £10,000 by Birley's brother-in-law, Thomas Hornby, who joined the firm as a sleeping partner. Marriage ties, too, serve to introduce the second of the three partners, Joseph Baxendale who, in 1815, married Birley's younger daughter, Mary. By his marriage, Baxendale gained entrance to the widely spread Langton-Birley-Hornby nexus. Joseph Baxendale borrowed from his wife's trustees the £8,000 he needed to buy his share in Pickfords.⁹

The firm of Cardwell, Birley[†] Hornby is itself of some considerable importance in elucidating this complex framework

9 Joseph Baxendale to Joseph Hornby Baxendale, 23 March 1868 F.P.

of relationships. Surviving records of the Blackburn concern suggest that it was an important source of supply for Zachary Langton's London warehouse. Indeed Langton was even more deeply committed, since in 1793 Birley, Cardwell & Co., in conjunction with other members of the Langton and Birley families, and a number of Blackburn men, including the Fieldens, stood surety for a loan of £15,000 to Langton by a group of London merchants.¹⁰ Although Baxendale had no such direct links, it is likely that he was acquainted with Birley, Cardwell & Co., for some time before his marriage. The London Warehouseman, Samuel Croughton, with whom Baxendale first entered upon business life, was also a customer of the firm. This connection continued in Baxendale's subsequent partnership with Charles Swainson in a calico-printing business at Bannister Hall, near Preston. It was possibly through his partner that Baxendale came to know the Birley family directly, for Swainson's sister was married to William Birley, the first cousin of Mary Birley, Baxendale's wife.

Mention of Charles Swainson leads directly on to Charles Inman, the third of the new entrants to Pickfords in 1817; Inman and Swainson were first cousins. Nothing has been discovered of Inman's earlier life, and he is much less firmly placed to the main pattern of relationships developed here

10 John Rylands Library, Eng. MS 1199/1 p 238b; the bond was cancelled in 1813.

than either Langton or Baxendale.¹¹ His grandfather's death in Kingston, Jamaica, hints at some concern with the West India trade, like the first John Birley, but beyond that only his connection with Lancaster, Baxendale's home town, is known.

The Pickfords' new partners can be placed in their business and social setting, but how they came to be connected with the Pickfords in the first place remains a puzzle. Nothing in the Pickford or Baxendale family papers throws any direct light on this vital question. It is possible that the link was through the firm of Birley, Caldwell & Co. The name 'M. Pickford' appears in the firm's ledger accounts for 1797, and again the following year, £40 to the credit of 'M. Pickford', appears in the entries under 'money on interest'.¹² Between 1798 and 1813 there is a gap in the books, but from 1813 through to the 1820s similar entries recur. Obviously no great stress could be put on this evidence, and it still leaves the essential 'why'? and 'how'? untouched. Possibly Pickfords did some carrying for the Blackburn firm, perhaps delivering Langton's supplies in London. Over the years the two sides might have acquired a deeper knowledge of each other, so that Pickfords were not approaching complete strangers in their search for new capital. This conjecture would at least be consistent with the type of intermediary role, as outlined,

11 Inman seems to have possessed smaller means than Langton and Baxendale. This is suggested in a letter of Inman to H.H.Birley, 30 June 1821, F.P. in which he draws a contrast between Langton and Baxendale as 'men of property' and himself - "what I have is chiefly borrowed." The Swainsons also show a whiff of the West India trade; Thomas Swainson a great-uncle of Charles, died in Kingston in 1786.

12 John Rylands Library, English MS 1199/2.

that the Blackburn firm had in the relationships between Langton, Baxendale and Inman themselves. It is also supported by the content of a letter, of March 1817, between the two Pickfords who had already left the partnership, which shows that negotiations on behalf of the new partners were being conducted by 'Mr. Birley'.¹³

Once agreement in principle had been reached two matters required particular attention, the transfer of the assets from the 'old' to the 'new' firm, and the terms on which the new partnership would do business.¹⁴ On both of these counts, Langton and colleagues sought to indemnify themselves against any responsibility for the Pickfords' accumulated past debts and thus to secure a fresh start.

All the four Pickford cousins were concerned in the arrangements transferring the property and stock of their old partnership to the new enterprise. James and Matthew Pickford II, although retired from the firm were presumably drawn in because the inability of Thomas and Matthew Pickford III to repay the capital owed to their cousins conferred on the latter an entitlement to be represented in any proposal which might materially affect the chances of their debt being settled. The main requirement was to secure an agreed valuation of Pickfords' assets, to serve as the basis for their transfer and thus to determine the relative share payments to be made in the new enterprise. The original intention to have an independent

13 James Pickford to Matthew Pickford II 24 March 1817, quoted by Halfpenny, "Pickfords': expansion and crisis", Business History, Vol.I (June 1959), p 119. The 'Mr. Birley' mentioned was possibly Hugh Hornby Birley, Baxendale's brother-in-law.

14 As settled by two documents, on which the following is based. (1) Draft Agreement, 1 April 1817, assigning Pickfords' assets to the new partnership, Halfpenny Papers. (2) Draft Partnership Agreement, 1 April 1817, CHP/25. For ease of reference, Pickfords prior to 1 April 1817 is referred to as the 'old' firm, and thereafter as the 'new' firm.

valuation, by an 'indifferent person', was not carried out, and in its place a pro forma valuation of £48,000, as estimated by James and Matthew Pickford II, was accepted. On this basis, and with a continued indemnity for the debts of the 'old' firm, the transfer of assets was agreed.

The partnership agreement determined the capital shares to be subscribed, half by Thomas and Matthew Pickford, in equal parts, half by the other three partners, also in equal parts. Each partner received an annual salary of £500 and five per cent on his capital, which was to be the extent of his drawings on the firm. All distributed profits were to be re-invested and could only be withdrawn by express agreement of all the partners. Any misuse of funds was penalised by a fine of £1,000 and expulsion from the partnership. Such strict measures to defend a firm's finances were common at the time, but seemingly a novel arrangement in Pickfords. Customary measures were also taken to secure, on the death of a partner, the interests of both the deceased and surviving partners. The firm was to trade under the name of T. & M. Pickford & Co. in Manchester, and Messrs. Matthew Pickford & Co. in London.¹⁵

The text of the agreement shows that Manchester was still regarded as Pickfords' headquarters; all accounts were to be kept there, all settlements and payments made there. Responsibility for the Manchester end of the business was allocated jointly to Thomas Pickford and Joseph Baxendale. In London Matthew Pickford and Zachary Langton were in control, and Charles Inman took up station at Leicester. No precise

15 The London Gazette 8 April 1817, p 872.

allocation of management duties was made, perhaps a dangerous omission. It seems that in practice each partner supervised the daily running of his own branch, but overall management control seems to have been left with the Pickfords.

The final question to be settled was the accumulated trading debt of previous partnerships. The bulk of such debts remained the continued responsibility of the two Pickford brothers, and they were aided by their new colleagues only to the extent of £10,000, part of a debt owed to Wilson, Crewdson & Co., the Kendal bankers. This £10,000 was secured by mortgages on Pickfords' premises in Manchester, London and elsewhere, and thus directly impinged on the new partnership. Consequently Langton, Baxendale and Inman joined with the Pickfords to secure this part of the loan by a joint bond and to pay interest until it was paid off in three years time. Even so, there were strings attached; this accommodation was to be taken as their purchase of half Pickfords' goodwill, itself valued at £10,000.

Lack of money had almost certainly been the critical force impelling Thomas and Matthew Pickford to seek new capital, and in approaching Langton and associates they had, for reasons outlined above, undoubtedly chosen well. It was not to be expected that the arrival of fresh funds would dispel all difficulties overnight. Indeed the financial situation remained not only pressing but probably deteriorated even further. Without in any way suggesting any dishonest dealings - it is likely that the Pickfords simply did not know how heavily in debt they were ¹⁶ - Langton and his colleagues probably joined

16 For example, Zachary Langton to Hugh Hornby Birley, 29 June 1821 commenting on the great reserve with which Thomas Pickford had revealed the real state of his affairs, mentions "the great degree of incorrectness with which such states have at various times been brought forward."

Pickfords in the belief that they were investing in a basically sound, viable concern which needed only the injection of their capital to restore it to a profitable trading position. They certainly had not expected to discover, as they soon did, that Pickfords was virtually bankrupt.

A few surviving letters¹⁷ exchanged between Langton, Baxendale and Inman, chiefly dating from 1817 to 1820, show that cash was a continuous problem. Margins were so tight that failure seemed as certain as the next dawn. In November 1818 Langton reported to Baxendale "I have now to say that besides the £1,000 which you direct me to advance... there has come today from Liverpool £500, and as much from Manchester. This keeps the Wolf from the door today and tomorrow... [and] enables me to pay £500 borrowed yesterday." This, however, was only a temporary respite; "although the Wolf is not quite so near, yet as he may again approach there can be no harm in preparing to receive him."¹⁸ A little earlier Inman had been anxious to discover whether they had the resources to meet some £1,500 worth of bills due within a few days.¹⁹ Apparently on that, as on other occasions, accommodation was found somewhere.

The provision of day to day finance seems to have been the concern of Langton and Baxendale although, because of the limited nature of the evidence, the Pickfords cannot be excluded from having had any share in this.²⁰

17 Most of these are in the Baxendale papers at Framfield Place, but one or two are at Pic 4/27. They were exchanged between the three partners, and thus concentrate on their position in Pickfords. There are only one or two letters of Thomas Pickford at Kings Sterndale which are relevant to these years.

18 Langton to Baxendale, 28 Nov. 1818. Pic 4/27.

19 Inman to Langton, 2 May 1818 F.P.

20 For example, a brief reference in Langton to Baxendale, 27 Nov. 1818 suggests that Matthew Pickford was active in securing short-term funds.

Thirty years a London merchant, Langton would presumably have his contacts in the discount houses. Baxendale's position in Manchester, still Pickfords' headquarters, would inevitably involve him in cash matters, and his main concern was apparently to supply the cash and credit needs of the London office.²¹ Outside of London, Baxendale seems to have used the Kendal bankers, Wilson, Crewdson & Co., who had been the Pickfords' bankers also. It would be surprising, however, if Langton and Baxendale failed to tap the non-institutional money sources available to them by virtue of their family connections, especially for their medium term capital needs. The loan to Pickfords of £2000 by the Hornby family for a twelve month period²² is unlikely to have been unique.

In view of the scale on which Pickfords was now operating - there were fifty-six agencies in March 1818 - working costs must have been high, requiring a comparable degree of liquidity. Canal tonnage payments, road tolls, contractors charges, feed, wages, all were recurrent expenses, requiring a ready supply of cash or bills. When money was scarce, it had to be rationed. "Cash matters have due attention but do not pay the Grand Junction canal account on the first lest you may want the money for the following days' payments."²³ Cannal tonnage payments seem to have been particularly troublesome, as the re-formed partnership found itself called upon to settle the balance of accounts standing due from the old firm. At one time the

21 Several of Baxendale's letters to Langton or the London office (the Castle) refer to the arrangements he had made in this respect.

22 Langton to Baxendale 1 Jan. (1819-21, precise date uncertain)

23 T. & M. Pickford & Co. (Baxendale) Manchester to Messrs. Matthew Pickford & Co., London, 25 Jan. 1820. F.P.

the Birmingham canal committee threatened to withdraw Pickfords' credit, but satisfactory terms were negotiated with both them and the Grand Union canal company.²⁴ Relations with the Grand Junction committee were less happy and, although no explanatory details survive, Baxendale for one thought that the canal company had acted pretty poorly towards them. "You know not how much", he wrote to Langton in 1820, "how very much I regret your transaction with the Grand Junction canal company. I would have seen them beyond the Atlantic rather than have paid them one half. As to their shabbiness and meanness it is upon a par with the Rochdale canal company, than which none can be worse. There are some companies that really do act honourably.." ²⁵

The need for liquidity to meet current expenditure had to be combined with the long term financing of fixed investment, especially in boats and premises for the canal trade. This would demand delicate judgment in the allocation of limited resources between the two objectives, both of which were necessary, but raised competitive claims in the immediate short run. Over-commitment in either direction would have been equally damaging. It is not known how the reconciliation was made, but Baxendale for one showed himself aware of the essential problem. Pickfords was advanced £5,000 by the Regents canal company as an inducement to remove its canal headquarters from Paddington to the company's own, more central, terminus at City road basin.

24 Birmingham canal company to Pickfords, 12, 30 June, 23 July 1817, Copy Letter Book, BCN 4/373, 1817-1822; Grand Union canal company, Board Minutes, 7 Jan. 1818, GUC 1/2.

25 Baxendale to Langton, 15 Feb. 1820 F.P.

When, in the course of 1820, new buildings were being erected preparatory to the canal's opening at the end of the year, Baxendale counselled against exceeding the sum allowed by the canal company until the next stock-taking clarified the firm's position: "so very large (a proportion) of our property is sunk in premises that we must be particularly cautious in our proceedings;" it was necessary to "have as large a capital (at hand) as possible to meet any contingency that may arise."²⁶

After four years' trading, finance was still pressing. In September 1820 Baxendale was still urging the London office to exert all efforts "to get in every pound you can"²⁷. Progress had apparently been slight, and the response to the additional capital small. Indications are that Pickfords' performance was felt to have been inferior to that of their competitors. In 1819 Bache & Co. was conveying such a quantity of goods that Thomas Pickford found inexplicable and "very astonishing."²⁸ An investigation of the design and capacity of Bache's boats found them to be in no way superior to Pickfords' own, and concluded that if they carried larger loads than Pickfords' boats, it was "owing to circumstances wholly unconnected with their size and construction."²⁹ It would be possible only to guess at the causes of this sluggishness. Surviving business correspondence shows Langton, Baxendale and Inman actively supervising their own sections of the business, but there is no evidence

26 T.&M.Pickford & Co. (Baxendale) Manchester to Messrs Matthew Pickford & Co., London, 9 Sept. 1820 F.P.

27 Baxendale to Messrs Matthew Pickford & Co., London 21 Feb.1821; this is the last of the surviving letters.

28 Thomas Pickford to Joseph Baxendale, 7 Jan, 1819/20 KS/2/5(a)

29 T.&M.Pickford & Co., Manchester (? to London) 12 Aug.1819, F.P.

as to the condition of the total concern. Decisions affecting overall operations seem to have been left to Matthew Pickford in London.³⁰ Since Langton and his colleagues were newcomers to the carrying trade it was fair policy to leave such matters to their experienced partners. In so far as Pickfords' real troubles in 1817, however, extended beyond temporary financial difficulties, to the management capability of the Pickfords, reliance on their judgement in respect of routine working only continued the situation which had ended in crisis.

The new partnership found that despite its indemnity it could not escape involvement in the two Pickfords' accumulated debts. Some overdue canal accounts from the previous partnership had had to be accepted and paid. Towards the end of November, 1818, Langton was horrified to discover the critical state of the Pickfords' indebtedness. Between the first and fifth of December, 1818, they were liable for over £5,300 owed to Dainty & Co., of Macclesfield and Praeds. "Since yesterday", he wrote to Baxendale, he had "looked at their situation as so extremely critical" that he had taken legal advice as to what position to adopt in the event of a "blow up". Langton was clearly shocked; the trouble was that "what so much concerns them I cannot look at as a matter of indifference to us."³¹ This indeed was the crux of the matter. If the Pickfords were simply abandoned to their fate, the firm would be brought down in the crash, and themselves with it. It was thus in their own interest

30 Again it is important to enter a caveat about the exclusive nature of the evidence. The letters show both Inman and Baxendale putting up various suggestions, on which the decision was left to Matthew Pickford.

31 Langton to Baxendale, 27 Nov. 1818, F.P.

to bale out the Pickfords. Baxendale had in fact, already suggested to Langton the advisability, for their own sake, of helping out the Pickfords if this would finally clear their debts.³² However, far more substantial assistance was needed than the moderate sum Baxendale had envisaged. The final position is briefly summarised by two documents. The first is an estimate of the assets and liabilities of the 'old' firm drawn up by Matthew Pickford III in October 1820, which revealed a deficiency of about £70,000.³³ The second document is a Letter of Licence, dated 2 April 1821, which declared Thomas and Matthew Pickford bankrupt in respect of their business debts and appointed a trustee, Hugh Hornby Birley, Baxendale's brother-in-law, to administer the Pickfords' estate and arrange for the liquidation of their debts, approximately £67,500, at a composition of ten shillings in the pound.³⁴ This latter document, together with relevant correspondence, shows how heavily indebted the Pickfords had become to their partners, and were now totally dependent on them. Over the years, the Pickfords had been accommodated by their partners, by loans or excess drawings on the firm's profits, in response to repeated requests for help, each of them presented, apparently as positively the last. In 1819, presumably in recognition of

32 Baxendale to Langton, 4 July 1817, F.P.

33 Quoted by Halfpenny Op.cit. pp 120-121.

34 Letter of Licence, between Thomas and Matthew Pickford and their creditors, Pic 3/1; draft copies are at F.P. and Halfpenny Papers. Hugh Hornby Birley, the trustee appointed, was president of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce 1820-27. He was also Captain of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry whose charge initiated the 'Massacre' of Peterloo. See R.J.White, Waterloo to Peterloo (1957) pp 185-6 for comment on the social structure of the Yeomanry. According to the Report of the Proceedings in the Cause Redford v. Birley and others (Manchester Local History Library, N.D., Trial 64-6, 8-9 April, 1822), the yeomanry cavalry assembled in Pickfords' yard, near Portland Street, and from there advanced on St. Peter's Fields.

such advances, the partnership terms had been redrawn, so as to put all five partners on an equal footing, thus placing the Pickfords in a minority. By 1821, the Pickfords were overdrawn to the extent of £17,031.17.7d, "or thereabouts", whilst, in recompense, their partners now held a general lien over the entire property, stock and profits of the co-partnership. In effective terms the Pickfords had already surrendered the business to their partners.

The two brothers were unable to pay even this composition without the continued help of their partners. This was forthcoming, but only on the most stringent conditions. The appointment of Birley as trustee is an indication that they had despaired of the Pickfords' ability to settle their debts themselves, but were determined to sort the matter out once and for all.³⁵ Accordingly, although the Pickfords were allowed to continue to participate in profits, the use of this money was strictly determined. The first claim, before any further distribution was the payment of five per cent interest on the £17,000 owed to their partners. The remainder was to be administered by the trustee, who would allow the Pickfords £500 each for personal income, and use the balance to discharge their debts. Birley, as the Pickfords representative, was to exercise their rights and privileges in the partnership, but it was a condition of the contract that no creditor had any

35 Langton expressed, in strong terms, his dissatisfaction at the continued failure of Thomas Pickford to live according to his current means and pay off his debts. Both Langton and Inman privately called for more than a bare assurance that such debts would be reduced in response to their aid. Without something more formal, wrote Inman, "we should be mad to make any further advances", Inman to H.H.Birley, 30 June 1821. *F.P.*

power to interfere in the business. These terms were to apply for the nineteen years of the 1819 partnership agreement, during which time the Pickfords were to be in no way molested by their creditors. Any infringement of the contract rendered it null and void, and freed the Pickfords from all their obligations. It was 1835 before all the creditors were paid off.

The terms imposed by the Pickfords' partners demonstrates that they were now firmly in control of the business. At about the same time Joseph Baxendale began to exercise a wider management role in Pickfords. Formal recognition of Baxendale's new position is probably indicated in the surviving journal of the Manchester office by a gap of several blank pages after the entries for March, 1820. This was the last month of Pickfords' financial year. All succeeding pages from April onwards carry Baxendale's initials.³⁶ At much the same time, there is a subtle change in the tone of letters written from the Manchester office, almost certainly Baxendale's work, to the London office. What had previously appeared as advice or suggestions now became clear directives.

As part of his wider duties, Baxendale embarked on an inspection of Pickfords' agencies. In February 1820 he visited Birmingham, and found there such a staggering state of disorder that when he left, after putting things to rights, he was in need of a holiday. In passing, the 'Birmingham affair'

36 Pic 4/4.

also gives some insight into the failings of the 'old' firm.³⁷

The Birmingham agency was in chaos. Unsettled accounts were found dating from as early as 1812, claims had been left unattended, paid-up accounts had not been entered in the books, unpaid accounts had been entered as paid, every description of fraud was uncovered. Baxendale reckoned that thousands of pounds had been lost to say nothing of the damage to Pickfords' name. The agent was sacked and prosecuted, and most of the rest of the establishment discharged. Baxendale had no option but to move in as temporary agent and, with himself working up to nineteen hours a day and the part-time assistance of four clerks, stick to it "until I either kill or cure". The accounts were in a terrible state of confusion, chiefly arising from the affairs of the 'old' concern: "In the whole course of my life I never either saw or imagined such a set of accounts and such mismanagement." The stock was in an equally deplorable state. It took Baxendale nearly two months of assiduous labour to bring order out of chaos. The experience taught Baxendale a lesson, one which he soon had occasion to apply. On a visit to Liverpool, within a short time of leaving Birmingham, he found that a newly appointed clerk was already defrauding the firm, whereupon "Monsiour (sic) the Caravan Clerk was invited to the right about instanter."³⁸

The shambles at Birmingham was doubtless an isolated case. Indeed it is difficult to imagine how Pickfords could have

37 The following is based on eight letters written by Baxendale mainly to Langton, between 12 Feb and 20 March 1820. All but one are at F.P. the exception being at Pic 4/7.

38 Baxendale to Langton (?) 12 April 1820. F.P.

survived many repetitions of such chaos. By contrast when Baxendale took time off from his labours to visit Worcester he found everything in order and the difference 'most wonderful.' However more than a few even lesser 'Birmingham' would have been extremely damaging and, although there is no further evidence concerning the condition of other agencies, similar neglect and inefficiency probably contributed to Pickfords' failure before 1817 and the continued sluggishness after that date. The events at Birmingham illustrate the ravages caused by inadequate management and provide some kind of pointer to the size of the task involved in refurbishing Pickfords' fortunes.

Eventually Pickfords' profitability was restored to a healthy state, but there is no direct evidence as to when the repair was complete. In 1828 the firm was reported to be "very prosperous"³⁹ but this might reflect the one year's trading rather than a true underlying trend. A neat sequence of profit figures would be welcome but the non-survival of the appropriate books makes this impossible. The only quantitative estimates that can be made are presented in Table 6.1. These figures come from Joseph Baxendale's personal papers. They were drawn up for his own purposes, so that any use of them outside of that context must be with the greatest caution.⁴⁰ They are, however, the only source available and are probably a rough indication of the course of Pickfords' profits.

39 Halfpenny Op.cit. p 124.

40 For a more extended comment on these figures, see appendix 2.

The figures show that until the early 1840s profits fluctuated sharply from year to year so that, in the upper ranges, only rarely did they stand at approximately the same level in consecutive years, e.g. 1818-19, 1827-8. Within this broad pattern there was, however, a significant difference of experience between the 1820s and the 1830s. Until about 1830 profits in absolute terms rose markedly on several occasions e.g. 1818, 1819, 1821, 1825, etc., but on the downswing they could drop away almost to nothing, as happened in 1826, for example. By contrast, after 1830, although the shifts were no less sharp, the bottom of the troughs was very much higher. Perhaps the years 1829-1832 might be selected as marking the transition to a fluctuation around a higher and more consistent level of profits. In the sixteen years between 1832 and 1847, profits fell below £15,000 on only four occasions: during the previous fourteen years that figure had been exceeded only three times. It seems reasonable to suggest, therefore, that it was not until the early thirties, after almost a decade of effort by Baxendale, that Pickfords' finances attained some regularity and solidity. By the 1830s Pickfords had also secured a name for prompt and efficient attention to business.⁴¹ It was on the strength of developments such as these that John Moss, Chairman of the Grand Junction railway company, was able to say in 1840, that "Mr. Baxendale was the greatest carrier on the canals."⁴²

41 Nasmyth Gaskell & Co. to Messrs. Pickford & Co. 23 Dec. 1839, Letter Book 6, James Nasmyth Collection, Eccles Public Library. In the 1820s Pickfords were also carrying for Jedediah Strutt, R.S. Fitton and A.P. Wadsworth, The Strutts and the Arkwrights, 1758-1830 (M.U.P. 1958) p 290. The authors conclude, p 291, on the basis of negative evidence that Strutt was efficiently served by his carriers. At a later date John Owen preferred to use Pickfords' canalboat to London than the railway. B.W. Clapp, John Owens Manchester Merchant (M.U.P. 1965) p 156.

42 Fifth report and evidence S.C. on Railway Communications pp 1840 (Vol. XIII) Q.3468; also W. Bass, S.C. on Oxford Worcester and Wolverhampton railway pp 1845 (Vol. XI) Q.3287.

As Moss's comment implies, Baxendale ultimately came to imprint his personality on Pickfords so deeply that there is great danger of distorting the historical record by writing under the influence of hindsight. It seems clear that Baxendale played the crucial role in restoring Pickfords' fortunes but it would be only too easy to interpret the whole period after 1817 in the light of his later dominance and so, for example, to regard Langton, Inman or the Pickfords as mere appendages to Baxendale right from the start. Some assessment is therefore needed of Baxendale's individual contribution, not only for the sake of historical accuracy but because through it Baxendale's true achievement should be placed in the proper perspective. The episode at Birmingham gives some indication of the scale of the undertaking involved in renovating Pickfords. The firm's renewed prosperity witnesses the successful completion of this task. The question to be answered here is how much of this is to be attributed to Baxendale himself, and how much to his partners, to the quality of Pickfords' employees, or even to purely external factors such as the level of activity in the economy.

The final issue would seem to depend on the quality of management, in particular, the effective responsibility and decision making for the total concern. It has already been suggested that the Pickfords were probably found wanting in this respect. By contrast, it is argued here that Pickfords' revival derived largely from Baxendale's personal powers of management. Is it, then, possible to determine when Baxendale

attained a position of leadership and thus free rein for his abilities? Among the fragmentary evidence of the 1820s and 1830s, there is nothing which illustrates 'management-in-action.' It is possible to indicate the trend of Pickfords' actions but not to explain why or on precisely whose decision such actions were made. However, largely by virtue of negative evidence, some points can be made concerning the extent of each partner's contribution to the management of Pickfords.

To look first at the Pickford brothers, with whom, seemingly, overall responsibility initially lay. Thomas Pickford is difficult to assess, easy to dismiss. There is no indication of his being actively involved in the business to any extent, even within the limited context of the Manchester office. Yet, not only did he remain in the partnership until his death, but his comments to a correspondent in 1839, quoted earlier, show that he was well aware of the forces which had shaped the development of land and canal conveyance over the years, and the likely impact of steam locomotion. So he knew well what had been happening in Pickfords and the nature of future plans, but such knowledge does not necessarily imply any share in the process of decision making. Thus Thomas Pickford is conspicuous chiefly by his absence, although this impression might well be due to the nature of the surviving evidence. Of Matthew Pickford, a little more of substance can be said. In the first years of the partnership Matthew was busy in London, consulted by Inman and others about the running of the vans,⁴³ left to

⁴³ London office to Leicester 21 Nov. 1818; Inman to Langton 23 Oct. 1818; Langton to Matthew Pickford 6 Sept. 1819. All F.P. Inman to Messrs M. Pickford & Co., London 30 Nov.(?) 1818, Pic 4/27.

decide on Baxendale's suggestion for an extra boat to Wolverhampton.⁴⁴ The settlement of a dispute with the boatmen in October 1818 was his concern.⁴⁵ However Matthew did not continue long in this position. Already by 1820 he seems to have been sharing such powers with Baxendale, and his retirement from the partnership in 1823 concluded his contribution to the firm.⁴⁶

There are equal problems in assessing the position of Langton and Inman, with whom it would seem a similar process of disengagement took place. Both remained for the full nineteen year term of the partnership, to 1838, but by then neither was apparently contributing much to the direction of Pickfords. Langton was 76 in 1838, so age alone might be a consideration. In the early days Langton's position in London was essentially the same as that of Baxendale and Inman in Manchester and Leicester, perhaps combined with some special responsibility for financial matters. It is, however, impossible to say when he withdrew from this position. Apart from Pickfords, his own warehousing business, in which he continued until at least 1820,⁴⁷ must have claimed part of his attention. No further reference to Langton as an active

44 Langton to Baxendale, 27 Nov. 1818, Pic 4/27.

45 Lea (Pickfords' agent at Braunston) to Langton 22 Oct 1818; Lea to Messrs M. Pickford & Co., London, 23 Oct 1818; Inman to Langton 23 Oct. 1818. All F.P.

46 London Gazette 16 Sept. 1823 p 1537; Bazendale notes that Matthew Pickford signed the stock account for the last time on 29 April 1823. From then on Birley signed the account as trustee until 1835 when the Pickfords' composition was complete. In another context he notes that "From 1st April 1823, though MW Pickford no longer a Partner the 1/5 share paid the same as to the other 4 partners - so continue till 1st April 1833". From 1 April 1834 the four surviving partners took equal shares.

47 Langton is entered in this capacity in Kent's London directory of 1819 and 1820, but not 1822; but he does not appear in the Post Office directory (Critchett & Woods) in 1820 or 1821.

partner appears after that date, but any accurate determination of his withdrawal is impossible.⁴⁸ The position of Inman is only slightly clearer. Between 1817 and 1820 Inman was plainly concerned in management matters at Leicester, but there the record stops. In a quite different context, however, Inman is on record as stating, in July 1832, that he was "not an acting partner in the business;" although he too, like Thomas Pickford, was well versed in the general running of the firm.⁴⁹

Finally, what of Baxendale himself? From about 1820 he began to exercise wider powers, and presumably his position was enhanced on Matthew Pickfords' retirement. Some confirmation is found in Baxendale's removal from Manchester to London and the purchase in April 1824, of a small estate at Whetstone, then just out of London on the Great North Road.⁵⁰ At the same time his salary was raised, for the year commencing 1 April 1824, from £550 to £800, suggesting increased responsibility. From then on Baxendale worked from London, perhaps replacing Langton in the process, and the City Basin canal depot became Pickfords' acknowledged headquarters, recognition that Pickfords' business was now really centred in London, not Manchester, and that the canal trade lay at the heart of it.

48 The only subsequent mention of Langton is in the Grand Junction canal company minutes. In reply to their inquiry, Langton wrote to say he was no longer connected with Pickford & Co. Board Minutes 2 Aug. 1838 GJC 1/6.

49 Report and evidence, S.C. on the Observance of the Sabbath Day, pp 1831/2, (Vol. VII) Q.1990. I would like to thank Mr. R. Scola, of the University of Kent at Canterbury, for this reference.

50 Baxendale, in a journal type book, a mixture of diary and accounts, dates the move as 1823-4, completed in April 1824 by the purchase of the Whetstone property for £6,500, loaned to him by the firm.

Although Baxendale probably acted as a kind of managing-director from about April 1824, it is impossible to say in any precise way how far he relied on or was independent of the continued assistance of his partners. Evidence of the late 1830s and beyond, by which time something of the 'myth' had gathered round his remarkable success, tends to emphasise the 'single-handed' aspect of Baxendale's achievement. An obvious point to make, in the first place, is that Baxendale inevitably depended on the constant support and efficiency of the many agents and clerks throughout the country. However, the quality of their work performance would be to a considerable extent a function of Baxendale's own ability to attract and select men of high calibre, to draw from them and transmit through them down to the junior office boy a concept of the firm which demanded a high level of industry and integrity. Mention of this proviso in no way lessens the scale of Baxendale's achievement; on the contrary it must surely heighten it, since on this count part of the renewal involved toning up the efficiency of the total machine.

A second, and perhaps less obvious point, is to notice that Baxendale's path had been smoothed by the action already taken to discharge the Pickfords' business debts. This created a favourable climate for the future. Although legally distinct, the 'new' firm trading under the name of Pickford & Co. could not in practice escape the reputation already attached to that name. However, thanks to the settlement of 1821, creditors had sure knowledge of how much, on what terms and when their

debts would be paid, enough to ensure a tolerant attitude to the firm. In addition, Baxendale, with similar certainty, could plan for the future confident that no new debts would descend on him and that the scheduled repayment of all existing debts was guaranteed. This was a necessary deck-clearing operation before any real forward movement could be achieved. As essentially a joint decision of all the partners, with important on-going consequences, this step created the basic framework within which Baxendale was able to work. To this extent, therefore, Baxendale remained constantly obliged to his colleagues.

What was there about Joseph Baxendale, which enabled him to have such a dramatic effect on Pickfords' fortunes? Born in 1785 the son of a Lancaster surgeon, he was 32 when he joined Pickfords. The Baxendales were originally a Liverpool family, cabinet-makers, and freemen of the borough of Lancaster, the county town. Josiah Baxendale, Joseph's father, left the family trade and town, and moved to Lancaster some time before 1783 or 4.⁵¹ In December 1784, he married Mabella Salisbury, the daughter of a lesser gentry family, and Joseph was born the following September. Nothing is known of Baxendale's childhood and youth, except that, although he is reported to have received 'a good education',⁵² he himself later

51 Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire Vol.87 (1935), The Rolls of the Freemen of the Borough of Lancaster 1688-1840 Part I, A. to L. p 20 1732-3, Baxendale, Josiah, of Liverpool cabinet-maker; p 27 1767-8, Baxendale, Joseph, of Liverpool, cabinet-maker, son of Josiah; p 29 Baxendale, Lloyd, of Liverpool, upholsterer, son of Josiah; p 36 1783-4, Baxendale Josiah, of Lancaster, surgeon, son of Joseph, late of Liverpool.

52 Samuel Smiles, Thrift (1892) Chapter IX 'Little Things', contains a brief memoir of Baxendale. In the Framfield Papers there are a few letters dated 1874, a couple by Smiles, intimating that the family were thinking of a biography of Baxendale to be written by Smiles. This chapter is the only visible outcome of the correspondence. It must be treated with caution in that it tends to reflect the 'myth' accruing to Baxendale by then.

called these years "Education, with uncertainty of calling or profession, a hopeless period and very wretched."⁵³ Apart from the social position implied by his father's profession and his mother's family background,⁵⁴ little can be said about the influences of his home environment which might have shaped his development. Josiah Baxendale seems to have been a forthright man, with an independent turn of mind, and in this son clearly took after father. Baxendale also had a great love for his mother and she was evidently a great influence on him.

In September 1804 Baxendale left Lancaster for Preston, "to fight my way through life", as he wrote in old age.⁵⁵ From there he moved on to London where, in March 1806, he was established with Samuel Croughton, wholesale linen draper of 33 St. Paul's Churchyard.⁵⁶ In London, Baxendale was apparently representing the interests of a Mr. Swainson at Croughton's warehouse. The evidence for this episode is very incomplete and obscure, but the following seems a reasonable interpretation of the situation. Croughton's was evidently the London warehouse outlet for the calico-printing works founded at Bannister Hall, near Preston, at the end of the

53 Baxendale to his son Joseph Hornby Baxendale, 23 March 1868 f.p.

54 Mabella Salisbury's mother, Mary Salisbury, had her portrait painted by George Romney who had a large, fashionable clientele in later eighteenth century London. H. Ward and W. Roberts, Romney, a biography and critical essay with a catalogue raisonné of his works (1904) Vol. II, p 139. Her husband, Thomas Salisbury, moved from Giggleswick to Lancaster, where he became a freeman in 1764-5. He is entered on the freedom rolls as 'gentleman'.

55 Memorandum of my life 1785 to 187- F.P

56 Croughton is so described in several of the London directories e.g. Holden's Triennial directory 1799, and 1805; Post Office directory, 1803 and 1808.

previous century by Richard Jackson and John Stephenson.⁵⁷ They became the leading calico-printers in the country, intimately connected with Richard Ovey, then the most influential of the London 'furniture printers.'⁵⁸ In 1804 the partnership was extended to take in a John Swainson, who is almost certainly the Mr. Swainson who figuresⁱⁿ correspondence exchanged between Baxendale and his father in 1808. Although not actually saying so, Baxendale implies that Swainson was a partner in the Bannister Hall concern; Jackson, one of the other partners, features prominently in the letters.⁵⁹

From this period there survives a letter written by Josiah Baxendale to Joseph, soon after his arrival in London.⁶⁰ Its contents, practical advice on how Joseph should conduct himself and put his time to the best use, give some insight into the

57 Information concerning Bannister Hall has been supplied to me by Barbara J. Morris, Assistant Keeper of Circulation at the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington, whom I would like to thank. See also G. Turnbull A history of the calico-printing industry for the development of calico-printing in Lancashire. For its relation with the cotton trade generally, Edwards, The British cotton trade 1780-1815 p 150 ff.

58 P.Floud, 'Richard Ovey and the rise of the London 'Furniture Printers', The Connoisseur, Oct. 1957 p 92. This and similar articles by P.Floud and Barbara J. Morris in The Connoisseur April, May 1957 and March 1958 are based on a continuous series of pattern-books from 1802-1840, surviving from Bannister Hall.

59 At no time does Baxendale give a Christian name to 'his' Mr. Swainson, a fact which leads to some difficulties. There is record, Bailey's British directory (1784), Vol. III, entry for Preston, of a John Swainson, linen draper. Calico-printing grew out of the linen trade, and if this Swainson were the one who joined Bannister Hall in 1804, such a connection might explain Baxendale's move first to Preston in 1804, and then on to London in 1806.

60 Dated 19 March 1806; for similar letters of father to son, see that of Jedediah Strutt to his son William, Fitton and Wadsworth The Strutts and the Arkwrights, p 144 ff and those of George Courtauld I to Samuel Courtauld III, D.C.Coleman Courtaulds. An economic and social history (Oxford 1969) Vol. I p 45 ff. There are notable similarities of character between Baxendale and Samuel Courtauld III.

character of Josiah himself. Baxendale's retention of the letter is also significant, perhaps because it symbolically marked the commencement of his business life, or, more deeply, because he accepted his father's advice and tried to model himself on it. Offering his "advice in respect of your present and future conduct, as upon it, in a great measure, will depend your happiness and welfare" Josiah first warned his son against joining any military associations, as possible occasions of "forming improper connexions", or dissipating his time in the many clubs and meeting places. Instead

"I would wish you to endeavour to make yourself a perfect master of Book-keeping, which you may accomplish very easily, by paying a little attention and court to your Book-keeper. The advantage you will ultimately receive from it, there is no appreciating. I would advise you to read, occasionally the best French authors, for at some period your knowledge of that language may be of essential service to you. If you have leisure and inclination to improve yourself in the Italian language, I would recommend you to make yourself a master of it; but above all things, I would wish you to make yourself acquainted, which you may do of an evening, with all the best English authors, as it will be a source of improvement and continual amusement... and if you get the character of having a little more learning and knowledge than your neighbour, it will not be any disadvantage to you."

Although daunting, Josiah's training programme was eminently practical and relevant to the needs of the time.

Baxendale did not stay long in London. Early in 1809 he left Croughton and returned to Lancashire, where he borrowed some capital and bought himself a share in the Bannister Hall partnership. For £4,000 he received 5/19ths of the profits, in association with Charles Swainson.⁶¹ Again, few important

61 Charles Swainson's relationship with his predecessor in the partnership, John Swainson, is something of a mystery. Charles Swainson's father, is named in the family pedigree, Burkes' Landed Gentry (1863 and subsequent editions), 'John Swainson of Preston', but who, according to the pedigree, died in 1800. Thus, he could not have been the John Swainson who joined Bannister Hall in 1804. Yet there is no other obvious candidate in the Swainson family, whilst the succession of two persons of the same name in the same partnership but in no way related seems too much of a coincidence.

details of this phase of his life survive. He built himself a cottage at Walton-le-Dale, near the factory and bleaching grounds, and from there travelled in search of orders. In the bitter calico-printing strike of 1815⁶² he was shot at on boarding the stage one evening, an incident which, not surprisingly, seems to have remained a vivid memory. In the same year he became engaged to Mary Birley, a connection which undoubtedly influenced the course of his later life. When Baxendale retired from the partnership in December 1816, he had netted about £6,000 in profits and interest, enough to pay his way, and pay off part of his capital. Entrance to Pickfords was at the cost of further and more extensive borrowing.

Although gained in a different context, Baxendale thus brought some management experience to Pickfords. In addition he brought a knowledge of book-keeping. He had anticipated by a couple of years his father's advice on the merits of a sound grasp of book-keeping in that since leaving home in 1804 he had kept a detailed cash account of his personal income and expenditure.⁶³ Baxendale was interested in the analysis of figures, as expressed in a characteristic and indicative phrase of his 'to sift to the marrow' some problem or difficulty. This suggests a degree of thoroughness comparable to that advocated by his father, for Josiah desired not just a

62 Turnbull, Op.cit. p 191

63 In these he kept the most detailed record of even the smallest sums paid out, e.g. threepence lost at an evening's whist, and such like. Two books survive, one 1804 to 1809, the second 1809-1818. The latter gives the source of his capital for the Swainson partnership, and a yearly statement of his profits, losses and interest payments from the concern.

smattering of book-keeping or Italian, but the mastery of them.

Baxendale's letters to his father, in 1808, gives the impression of him, at the age of twenty-three, as a competent and self-assured young man. Independence and self-reliance were features on which Josiah evidently put some stress. Not unnaturally, when Baxendale found himself in difficulties or in need of financial help, he turned to his father for advice and support. This was forthcoming, but not on terms that released him from further responsibility or effort. So when Josiah made £2,000 available, half the capital needed to go in with Swainson,⁶⁴ it was as a loan on which he charged the customary five per cent interest. On a later occasion, Josiah reminded his son that life was a harsh school, but that there was only one way in which its lessons could be learnt. Even his abortive years in London could be put to good account. "An early lesson [in life] sometimes makes a lasting impression, which makes people cautious in their money transactions. I hope now things will go on more smoothly with you and that you will reap the benefits which will arise from these distressing times."⁶⁵

Baxendale's response to these promptings seems to have been, among others, a confidence in his own abilities, suggested for example, by his entry to the partnership of Bannister Hall. His willingness to take this step on the basis of borrowed money, repeated at a higher level of borrowing when he joined Pickfords, is in line with the moderate risk-taking regarded

⁶⁴ Of the rest, he got £1,000 from his great-uncle, Lloyd Baxendale, and £1,000 from John Stout, a family friend, both at five per cent.

⁶⁵ Josiah to Joseph Baxendale, 27 Oct. 1810 F.P.

as a hall-mark of the classic entrepreneur. It seems a fair presumption that Baxendale was hard-working, yet he was constantly on the move during these years. For example, from mid-October to mid-December 1811, he went on an extended tour, by gig and horse, of the west midlands and the west country, and he was on the move again in the following years. Such journeying may well have been in the course of business,⁶⁶ seeking orders for new patterns and designs, but might also indicate symptoms of restlessness. If so, he soon found in Pickfords enough to absorb any surplus energy.

Combining the foregoing with what can be discovered about the mature Baxendale, certain attributes emerge which seem material to his success in Pickfords. Notably he possessed sound business judgement, a forceful yet attractive personality, a large capacity for hard work, and a thorough, methodical mind allied to some ability with accounts. In the context of Pickfords' immediate troubles, perhaps the last mentioned quality, method and orderliness together with some knowledge of accounting, was the most directly relevant. On Baxendale's own statement, Pickfords' accounts were found to be in "the most wretched state of confusion", so that the new partnership only avoided bankruptcy by keeping its own accounts strictly separate from those of the 'old' firm.⁶⁷ It might be an

66 Several letters at F.P. show that Baxendale was engaged in the sale of patterns, especially among his family circle and friends. One undated and unsigned, but written from Chalfont St. Giles, Bucks., in the style of an aunt, expresses disappointment at not getting a visit that month, having heard, "that your partner has been in town instead of you." This suggests regular business trips of this kind.

67 Memoranda of my Life F.P. Enclosed in the flap of these books are two sheets of paper, pages 1 and 3 of some consecutive thoughts Baxendale wrote down in 1866. Sheet 1 refers to the commencement of the partnership.

exaggeration to say that Baxendale was obsessed with figures, but certainly in his surviving papers collections of figures and their analysis abound. They give the impression that, on the basis of contemporary accounting knowledge, Baxendale was more than competent,⁶⁸ Conventional mercantile accounting, although inadequate for the more sophisticated needs of capital accountancy, could be adopted sufficiently to provide a guide to overall profitability, provided it was performed with care and method. The chaos at Birmingham was sorted out not by complex technique but by perseverance, long hours of careful checking, reconstituting the books. As much as anything this required mental discipline and strong motivation, reinforced perhaps in Baxendale's case by the threat of bankruptcy.⁶⁹

It is difficult to say how far Baxendale could use his skills as a 'tool of management.' He certainly expected an examination of the books to guide the firm in its progress.⁷⁰ His surviving jotters⁷¹ contain the most detailed unit cost/revenue analysis. Labour charges of all categories and rates, the itemised construction costs of a new boat, daily working costs, including wear and tear, of two boats working between Manchester and Liverpool, all were carefully noted. He could

68 The following paragraphs are influenced by S. Pollard The Genesis of modern management (1965) chap. Six, Accountancy and Management.

69 Pollard, Op.cit. p 245 and note 2, comments that efforts to produce really accurate accounts invariably followed a crisis of some sort.

70 An apt illustration occurs in a letter to his son, in the last years of his life. "That I am not satisfied with the accounts I fully admit, and it may be owing to my own denseness, all that I ask is, to endeavour to show me how I am wrong, by for instance take Portsmouth, and analise these accounts to their very marrow." Joseph Baxendale to Joseph Hornby Baxendale, 16 Aug. 1868, F.P.; also Baxendale to Lloyd Baxendale, 16 July 1863, Pic 4/27.

71 One dates from 1821-22 at Manchester, the other was probably written up in 1833, with later additions. This contains extensive details about Pickfords stock of boats, their numbers, age, value, second-hand price, etc.

calculate the average quarterly earnings of selected fly-boats over roughly comparable periods in 1827, 1830, 1832, and 1837, down to earnings per day and per mile. The road haulage working costs used below,⁷² and similar statistical material in Pickfords' papers,⁷³ are almost certainly Baxendale's work or inspired by him.

In his own notes, Baxendale depreciated his fixed capital as represented by Pickfords' boats; the horses too were obviously written down at the annual stock-taking. But what principles were applied and how capital was charged to the accounts is unknown. An interesting development in this respect was the establishment of a reserve fund in 1838, to which one-fourth of the profits were allocated. This was probably by way of a sinking fund rather than the proper provision of reserves to meet depreciation, and the amount allowed suggests a round rather than a calculated sum. This impression is suggested by the fact that on a further adjustment to the partnership in 1843, this amount was reduced by a half.

Baxendale was also a skilled administrator, with the ability to simplify and in so doing strengthen Pickfords' organisation and method. D. Stevenson, who from his experience in the goods traffic department of the London & Birmingham

72 Pic 4/7 Memo Book, and Chap. 7 below

73 For example in Pic 4/7 p 107 are details of provender cost for four years 1831-2 to 1834-5, giving average price per quarter/hundredweight for oats, beans, hay, straw, according to place of purchase. There is a more extensive statement on similar lines, for 1839-1901 in Pic 4/25 p 74. Again Pic. 4/7, pp 109-110, for 1829-1835, is a statement of average costs per mile of the boats, and horses, incorporating provender costs, wages, salary, rent, stock repairs, travelling expenses, blacksmith, saddler, oil, stabling, taxes, tolls, sundries, wear and tear on horses. Pic 4/25 also contains p 73 (1) Statement of number of horses returned for assessed taxes, 1822-66, (2) stock of horses, 31 March 1831; each entered with its name, description and value.

railway company, was in a position to know Baxendale well, declared that "the success of Pickford & Co., and the general efficiency of that establishment, proved his administrative powers; and his foresight and wisdom at this critical time for carriers were borne out by eminent results. His clear system of forms and arrangements, by which a hold of the goods conveyed is maintained from the time they leave the consignor until they reach their destination, continues to be the basis of the carrying business all over the kingdom."⁷⁴ This was not the only borrowing by railway companies. The Eastern Counties railway, in addition to several staff, also took Pickfords as a model for dealing with its correspondence. To each outgoing communication was attached a letter of the alphabet denoting the office or clerk responsible for it. As a result all queries or business arising could be channelled to the appropriate person for prompt attention.⁷⁵ This form of office structure survived in Pickfords through to the end of the period studied here. The earliest use of it discovered to date is in correspondence with the Oxford canal company in 1824, but this may be explained by the chance survival of records. It is noticeable however that this date accords with the emergence of Baxendale, and the principles underlying the procedure is consistent with his dictum, 'method is the hinge of business.'

74 D. Stevenson, Fifty years on the London and North Western railway (1891) p 14.

75 Neele, Op.cit, p 8; see also my article 'A note on the supply of staff for the early railways' Transport History Vol. I (1968).

Baxendale was an energetic man, an essential quality in view of Pickfords' wide geographical spread of agencies and staging points. The carrying trade in particular made great demands on personal supervision. Baxendale spent much of his time on the move, by land and water, checking the operational efficiency of the concern. His personal records show that he applied himself to this task with considerable vigour, as he constantly travelled on tours of inspection. For example, between mid-December 1834 and the same time the following year, he spent 127 days on the move, travelling by boat, coach and post-horse a total distance of 4,622 miles. A special boat, the 'Joseph' was allocated for this use, to be replaced in 1827 by the 'Lark', a purpose-built craft, which cost £350 as opposed to £190-200 for a normal trading boat. The canal companies were accommodating; the Warwick & Napton committee agreed to let Pickfords' representatives pass free of toll when using their boat for business or pleasure purposes.⁷⁶ Baxendale wasted no time on these trips. His father Josiah Baxendale accompanied him on one trip and kept a diary of their journey.⁷⁷ The presence of guests was not allowed to slow the pace. The continuous record of late nights and early mornings, 5.00 to 6.00 a.m. rise was the norm, suggests that a pretty robust constitution was required for prolonged travel of this kind. The £500 "voted to Joseph Baxendale for his exertions" in 1836 was thoroughly earned.

By the later 1830s Baxendale was able to relax his efforts on Pickfords' behalf, but his business interests, and proved

76 Board Minutes, 1 Aug. 1820, 7 Sept. 1821 WNC 1/9.

77 There is a copy of this diary at Pic 4/26.

ability, were not confined to Pickfords. In 1836 he joined the board of the Regents canal company, and remained for three years. A spell as adviser on goods' traffic and superintendent of the out-door department on the London & Birmingham railway followed in 1839, but that, in conjunction with his other activities, over-taxed him and had to be given up. A strong connection with the railways remained, however. He became a director of the South Eastern railway company in 1837 and as chairman in the early forties was instrumental in pushing the line through to Folkestone, and establishing a through-route between London and Paris by way of Boulogne. Other railway interests in the 1840s included a seat on the board of the East India railway company, a directorship of the Amiens & Boulogne railway,⁷⁸ and a substantial investment, possibly a director's role, in the Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Nord.⁷⁹ He was also for a time adviser to the Belgian state railways.⁸⁰ His efforts on behalf of the South Eastern, coming after many years of strenuous work, proved too much, and his health cracked. In July 1844 he left on a long continental holiday, and during his absence a rival faction engineered his removal from the chairmanship of the railway company.

78 Baxendale's papers contain a series of letters, 1845-52, from Lafitte, Blount & Co. of Paris, the Anglo-French bankers who promoted several French lines, notifying him of the payment of calls on his shares, and credits placed to his account by the Amiens & Boulogne railway company. One letter in 1845 notifies Baxendale of F. 15625 placed to his account with them by the railway company as his portion of the commission of 1% allowed by the company for the raising of the capital. A later note, Nov. 1846, refers to Baxendale as administrator of the company.

79 According to an admission card for the company's general meeting in 1858, Baxendale had 100 shares and two votes.

80 Second report, S.C. on Railways pp 1839 (Vol. X) QQ.5702-5752.

Along with energy went enterprise. Baxendale had a sound business mind and on many occasions his foresight proved invaluable. For example, he quickly appreciated the opportunities offered by railways, and was looking to the Liverpool & Manchester and Grand Junction lines even before they were operational. In 1838 he correctly anticipated a failure of the water supply at Tring summit on the Grand Junction canal, a little way out of London, and when the time came, he had the details of an arrangement with the London & Birmingham company all tied up, so that he could smoothly transfer his essential traffic to the railway, while his rivals were left floundering. Again, convinced that the accommodation for goods traffic planned by the London & Birmingham railway company would be totally inadequate, he bought a site at Camden and built a warehouse on it for his own use. Events quickly proved his foresight. Not only Pickfords benefited; the development of Folkestone harbour by the South Eastern railway company as the terminus of a rail ferry service to the continent owed much to Baxendale's appreciation of its potentialities.⁸¹ Railways were a supreme challenge to the established order of the transport world and Baxendale's response to them is indicative. While canal companies and many carriers and coach proprietors hung back, Baxendale, together with the likes of Chaplin and Horne, sought to turn them to advantage.⁸²

81 An editorial in the Folkestone Chronicle, 30 March 1872, on his death, recorded the town's debt to Baxendale, and emphasised his personal role in the development of Folkestone as a port and the benefits his foresight had brought to the town.

82 For a discussion of Pickfords in this wider context, see my article 'The railway revolution and carriers' response: Messrs. Pickford and Company, 1830-50' Transport History, Vol. II (1969) p 48 ff.

Baxendale was supported by a forceful personality. His portrait, presented to Mrs. Baxendale in 1847 by Pickfords' agents as a tribute to his achievement in the previous thirty years, has the pose of a confident, self-assured man.⁸³ The timing of the railways' challenge, coming within a relatively few years' of his overhaul of Pickfords, and his response to it, proved his strength of character. His was a dominant personality, without being domineering. Stevenson considered him "cheerful and witty in conversation, ever had a word of encouragement for the youngsters, and was universally beloved by those whom he employed."⁸⁴ He was fond of aphorisms such as 'Nothing without labour,' and 'He who spends all he gets is on the way to beggary,' a selection of which he had posted in Pickfords' offices and warehouses. He was, in short, Victorian 'thrift' writ large, exhibiting all the virtues so highly esteemed by Samuel Smiles, and enjoying the appropriate awards.⁸⁵

When the partnership of 1819 expired, and Langton and Inman retired, Pickfords was soundly based, the largest canal carrying concern in the country. Baxendale and Thomas Pickford continued the partnership, leasing, rather than purchasing, from the expired partnership all the firm's premises and fixtures, for £4,100 per annum, and the canal boats at £12 per annum each. The proceeds of this arrangement were to serve

83 The original hangs at Framfield Place, together with an inscribed roll containing a dedication to Mrs. Baxendale and the signatures and length of service of all the agents, who had jointly commissioned the portrait. One of them had been with Pickfords for 46 years, four for 30 years or more, and fourteen for twenty years or more.

84 Stevenson Fifty years on the London and North Western railway p 14.

85 Smiles Thrift, Chap. IX.

partly as an indemnity, partly as an investment fund for the benefit of the previous partners.⁸⁶ Baxendale and Pickford took over 44 depots, as listed in the agreement, together with a hundred or so smaller agencies, 112 trading boats, and about 800 horses.⁸⁷ Although Baxendale became the major partner with a half share to Thomas Pickford's quarter share, he seems to have given up the day-to-day management of Pickfords and confined his attention to matters of overall policy.

A new generation of Baxendales joined the firm. J.H. Baxendale, the eldest son, entered the firm in 1836,⁸⁸ and was followed in time by his three younger brothers.⁸⁹ In 1843 Baxendale's two elder sons Joseph Hornby and Lloyd were brought into the partnership and each received a sixteenth share in the business.⁹⁰ Thomas Pickford retained his position until his death, after which the remaining Pickford family interest was bought out.⁹¹ Pickfords passed fully into the ownership and control of the Baxendales.

86 Deed of Arrangement, 3 May 1838 KS/2/2. An earlier draft at F.P. gives a pro forma valuation of the boats at £40 each.

87 Pic. 4/25 p 73, 'Statement of number of horses returned for assessed taxes, 1822-1866.

88 Diary of Joseph Hornby Baxendale, Pic HH.

89 Only the elder three eventually stayed with the firm. Salisbury, the youngest, apparently did not take to business.

90 Memoranda of my life attached sheets in the flap.

91 London Gazette 27 Aug. 1850 published the expiration of the partnership. This shows that the third son, Richard Birley, was now a partner, so there must have been a further re-arrangement after 1843. From 1850, Baxendale and his three sons continued alone. The terms of the arrangement with Mrs. Elizabeth Pickford, Thomas' widow, dated 20 July 1865, are at CHP/27.

CHAPTER 7.

THE APOGEE OF ROAD TRANSPORT

The road and canal transport industries had both enjoyed many years of boom conditions before they were replaced by the railways.¹ By 1820 the worst of the post-war depression had passed; Britain then experienced some fifteen years of strong, if erratic, economic progress.² Rising real incomes, rising output, increased exports and imports, all meant that the quantum of goods to be transported to domestic and foreign markets rapidly increased.

The sustained pressure of demand induced similar expansion in the road and canal transport sectors, as well as the eventual emergence of railways. The large profits enjoyed by certain canal companies are a familiar feature of these years. At the same time the coaching industry reached its peak. Inter-city coaches were abundant, speeds the fastest yet recorded, competition keen to the point of ruination. Considerable coaching 'empires' were built up by people like Chaplin, Horne and Sherman. The boom in road transport, however, was far from confined to passenger travel. The conveyance of goods by road also prospered. For all the great importance of canal transport to Manchester the city still supported in 1816 "nearly two hundred land carriers, who carry goods to and from the various parts of the kingdom, in waggons or carts."³ Years of rapid economic expansion could only increase the opportunities open to road hauliers, to which Pickfords responded with a notable expansion of its van and waggon services.

1. This chapter focuses on the 1820s and 1830s. There are two important sources in Pickfords' records, a Journal 1817-1822 Pic 4/4 and a Memo book Pic 4/7 which gives details of road operations in the 1830s.

2 S.G. Checkland The rise of industrial society in England, 1815-1885 (1964) chap. 2, esp. pp 11-17.

3 J. Aston A picture of Manchester (Manchester 1816) p 230.

Pickfords' van, 'on springs and guarded', was introduced in July 1814 on the route between London and Manchester by way of Northampton, Leicester, Loughborough and Derby.⁴ This line remained the basic core of Pickfords' van service to which various extensions were made from the autumn of 1819 onwards. In September 1819 a van service was started from Sheffield, taking in Chesterfield, Mansfield and Nottingham along the way and connecting with the London-bound vans at Leicester.⁵ By 1825 the service was run on a daily basis.⁶ Liverpool was next to be joined to the system. In December 1819⁷ a van was introduced between Manchester and Liverpool but soon a more direct link with London was established by way of a branch van from Macclesfield. The down London van to Manchester arrived at Macclesfield at 2.35 am and at 4.00 am a van left for Liverpool. Having completed the journey in seven hours, it returned the same day to connect with the up London van which arrived in Macclesfield at 10.00 pm.⁸ A van was also run between Macclesfield and Congleton. Finally, from March 1821 a further van was started between Sheffield and Leeds which completed a round trip each day.⁹ Additional vans were run between various places along existing routes as the weight of

4 Manchester Mercury, 5 July 1814.

5 Commencing 2 Sept. 1819, according to mileage payment to John Stones, the contractor for this and the London-Manchester van, Journal, Pic 4/4 March 1820.

6 Sheffield directory (Gell) 1825 p 177.

7 Commencing 6 Dec. 1819; payment to J. Arrowsmith, horse contractor, Journal, Pic 4/4 March 1820

8 J. Earles, Streets and houses of old Macclesfield (Macclesfield 1915), p 184, Citing an 'Old Macclesfield directory of 1820'; see also J. Plant and T. Gregory The history and directory of Macclesfield and its vicinity (Manchester 1825) p 183.

9 Commencing 6 March 1821; Journal, Pic 4/4 June 1821.

traffic demanded. Although the van service to Liverpool and Sheffield commenced as branch services off the main route between London and Manchester, it is likely that eventually through-vans from London were run to both of these places.

The vans provided a specialist service, with speed of transit as the prime factor. They travelled at approximately 6 mph, a speed roughly half-way between that attained by the slower waggons and faster coaches. In the 1830s, the 186 miles between London and Manchester were completed in thirty-four hours, a reduction of two hours compared with the original timing.¹⁰ Coaches took between seventeen and nineteen hours for the same journey.¹¹ Similar reductions in van times took place on the Sheffield and Liverpool routes. The running of the vans had many features in common with the coaching trade. The horses travelled at a trotting pace and each team of four was replaced at regular intervals. To maintain the necessary speed the horses had to be of a calibre comparable to that of the best coach horses. Indeed races between vans and coaches were not uncommon.¹² The vans were run according to a carefully timed schedule. Contractors who horsed the vans were fined if they failed to maintain the schedule.¹³ Initially Pickfords relied quite heavily on outside contractors for the supply of

10 By comparison of advertisements in various trade directories.

11 Jackman Transportation in modern England pp 700-701.

12 Inman to Pickford & Co., London, 30 Nov. (?1818) Pic 4/27 p 5.

13 Inman to Pickford & Co., London 18 Nov. 1818, F.P.; also 30 Nov. (?1818), Pic 4/27, p 5; fine against van horse contractor J. Bass, Journal Pic 4/4 Dec. 1821.

both vans and horses; in 1820 Pickfords horsed only the stage immediately in and out of London. By the later 1830s, however, Pickfords supplied all the horses it needed.¹⁴

Conveyance of goods by van was speedy, but it was expensive. Meaningful figures of the cost of road haulage during this period are particularly sparse whether for coach, van or waggon. The trend of haulage costs was perhaps upwards in the post-Napoleonic war years¹⁵ although in 1838, before railway competition was yet effective, Daniel Deacon, forty years a carrier, claimed that charges between London and Yorkshire had fallen by more than half compared with twenty to twenty-five years previously.¹⁶ The cost of conveyance by van was in excess of that by waggon and probably generally, but not necessarily, less than that by coach. Deacon gave the relative charges per cwt between London and Yorkshire as coach 18/-d, van 12/-, waggon 6/-. Pickfords' opening charge by van between Manchester and London was 20/- per cwt or 2d per lb., which by July 1822 had been raised to 23/4 per cwt. Although rates were later reduced to meet the competition of a rival, their lowest point was 16/-d per cwt or something less than 1½d per lb.¹⁷

- 14 Journal Pic 4/4, passim, payments to horse contractors; Memo book, Pic 4/7 names Pickfords' van horse stations and the timing of the vans at each. There is a gap of 80 miles between Brixworth, near Northampton, and Leek. In 1837 Baxendale said Pickfords provided all the van horses the firm needed. S.C. on Railroad communication, pp 1837-8 (Vol.XVI) Q.1135.
- 15 W. Albert 'The Justices' rates for land carriage', Transport History Vol. 1 (1968) p 120. It should be noted that the rates given by Copeland Roads and their traffic p 70 are not for road as stated there, but for canal conveyance.
- 16 Evidence of Daniel Deacon, Second report S.C.on Postage pp 1837-8 (XX) Q.7267.
- 17 Samuel Salt, Railway and commercial information, (London and Manchester 1850) p 11, item No. 19. Salt frequently gives no source for his information, but whenever it can be checked it is always accurate.

It is impossible to say how these compare with coach rates over the same distance and time period. Jackman quotes a rate of 1d per lb. by coach from Birmingham to London in 1833,¹⁸ and there is some evidence that Pickfords' van rate from Nottingham in 1819 exceeded that by coach.¹⁹ But the whole question awaits further evidence.

Similarly there is only the most limited information as to the traffic conveyed by the vans. One regular consignment was bullion. Bankers found the vans, protected by armed guards, particularly useful. "Two, at least, of the old Manchester banks were accustomed to send their heavy London packets by Pickfords' van - an institution now defunct, but which once formed one of the most interesting features of English commercial life. The great vans were as familiar as the railway trains of today."²⁰ Other articles included silk goods and also meat brought up to London from Leicester and Northampton.²¹ In general, therefore, 'van goods' would be high value, low volume articles or commodities, like meat, where speed of conveyance was essential.

A reliable source quotes the following figures as Pickfords' profit on its Manchester to London van between 1818 and 1825.^{22.}

18 Jackman Transportation in modern England p 723.

19 Langton to Matthew Pickford 6 Sept. 1819, F.P.

20 L.H.Grindon, Manchester banks and bankers, (2nd ed. 1878) p 173. Also Baxendale's evidence SC on Railways PP 1838 (Vol. X) Q.2527; Inman to Langton 23 Sept. 1818, Pic 4/27 p 1.

21 Fifth report and evidence, SC on Railway communication PP 1840 (Vol. XIII) evidence of William Prentice and Thomas Bonser meat salesmen of Newgate Market.

22 Salt Op.cit. p 11 Between 1820 and 1825 the movement of profits broadly corresponds to price fluctuations as indicated by the Gayer, Rustow & Schwartz index of domestic commodities. The rise in profits from 1818 to 1820, against a strong price fall, would suggest a real increase in profits in those years. See appendix 2. fig.1.

1818	£23,039.	6.	2d
1819	£23,532.	5.	9d
1820	£25,260.	2.	7d
1821	£24,384.	16.	4d
1822	£22,615.	16.	6d
1823	£23,423.	4.	6d
1824	£23,653.	15.	6d
1825	£23,835.	13.	9d

The implication was that such profits were excessive: the figures were intended to show the cost reductions achieved by the railways. Profits were at least sufficiently large to attract a competitor to Pickfords' van in Manchester. In February 1825 the 'Association Van' was set up and it was to meet this competition that the reduction in van rates noted above was made. When the rate had fallen to 16/- per cwt Pickfords bought off the opposition.

However, other competitors remained. John Johnson & Co., ran vans from Manchester and Liverpool to London in much the same time as Pickfords in the 1820s. In Sheffield, too, Pickfords were opposed by a competing van, that of Deacon, Harrison & Co., which followed a different route but arrived in London at the same time.²³ Deacon, Harrison & Co., were a substantial firm, mainly engaged in land carriage, which competed with Pickfords over a wide area between London, the east midlands and Yorkshire. As well as a van service, both firms had a mixed road and canal service from Sheffield to London - by waggon to Leicester and then on to London, in six days, by fly boat. Deacon, Harrison & Co., also had a waggon service direct to London, in eighty hours.²⁴ The trade

23 Sheffield directory (Gell) 1825; Nottingham directory (Glover) 1825.

24 Deacon's evidence, second report SC on Postage PP 1838 (658) Q.7224 ff.; Sheffield directory (Gell) 1825.

directories of London and provincial towns demonstrate the extent of the carriers' competing services, and especially the wide coverage of land carriage in the 1820s and 1830s.

The vans, catering for a particular type of traffic, were thus an addition to the existing road transport facilities. They did not replace the conventional waggons. Throughout these years, Pickfords continued to include its London waggons as part of its normal road services from Manchester and when canal transport was interrupted, by frost or the annual summer stoppage for maintenance work, the waggons came into their own again. There was thus sufficient demand for conventional road services, irrespective of canal transport, to keep some waggons in regular use. Moreover there were areas where canals either did not exist or involved circuitous routes, for example in the east Pennine region where Pickfords found considerable scope for road haulage. In September 1820 a waggon service, six days a week, was introduced between Sheffield and Nottingham. The thirty-five miles were completed in seventeen hours.²⁵ Sometime between 1822 and 1825 Sheffield was linked to Manchester by waggon. Initially the Sheffield waggons approached Manchester from a northerly direction by way of Glossop, Staley-bridge, and Ashton but in March 1835 a southerly approach via Castleton and Bullock Smithy was adopted. In July the same year the service was stepped up to twice daily.²⁶ There was also a road service between Manchester and Halifax.²⁷ Finally

25 Commencing 17 Sept. 1820, Journal, Pic 4/4, Oct. 1820; the time schedule appears in the Memo book, Pic 4/7.

26 Sheffield directory (Gell) 1825. There is no mention of this in the Journal which ends March 1822. The later details are from the Memo book Pic 4/7.

27 See the accompanying maps for 1829 and 1832, following p 83 below.

during the 1830s Pickfords was also operating a daily waggon service from Huddersfield to Leeds, Bradford and Halifax.²⁸ Since both Leeds and Bradford had access to canal transport by their position on the Leeds & Liverpool canal some competition between road and canal transport is suggested. For traffic passing between either of these two places and south Lancashire, the Leeds & Liverpool canal was a circuitous route. The long detour would be eliminated if goods were sent by road to Huddersfield and thence by the Huddersfield canal to Manchester. There was no comparable water link between Sheffield and Manchester or Nottingham.

Limited comment is possible on Pickfords' capital and working costs for road transport during these years.²⁹ The cost of certain items is known but since the number of waggons, vans and horses Pickfords actually used is unknown no reliable estimate of total capital cost can be made. In March 1820 two new four-wheel vans were bought for the Manchester to Liverpool service at a cost of £162. 14. 6d. If Pickfords owned only a dozen vans to cover all its services the purchase cost would be nearly £1,000. Waggon were less expensive; a three-inch wheel waggon cost £37 and a six-inch wheel waggon, the more common vehicle, cost £48. The new price of horses is unknown but in 1831, when Pickfords had some 250 horses in use on the roads, van horses were valued at an average of £17.10.0d each and waggon horses at £16 each. By comparison boat horses were valued at only £7 each. On the basis of these figures the

28 Memo book Pic 4/7.

29 Most of the following figures derive from the Journal Pic 4/4, or the Memo book, Pic 4/7. The number and value of horses in 1831 are from 1. Statement of number of horses returned for assessed taxes 1822-1866; 2. Stock of horses, 31 March 1831; both at Pic 4/25 p. 73.

cost of putting a four-horse van on the road would be £150 and that of a six-inch wheel waggon and team of seven horses £160. The capital cost of the waggon and horses for the Huddersfield service would have been £570.

Pickfords avoided part of the total cost by hiring some of the necessary stock. At Huddersfield, Pickfords owned only two of the six waggons in use. The waggons for the Manchester to Sheffield service were also hired. During the years 1817 to 1822 vans were hired at 4d to 4½d per double mile, van horses on average at 1/11 to 2/- per double mile, with some small downward reduction over the five-year period to which these figures relate. Waggons, at 3d per double mile, and waggon-horses at 1/6d, were a little cheaper. The capital saving to Pickfords of hiring four of the Huddersfield waggons was £171, the equivalent of two years rent for them.

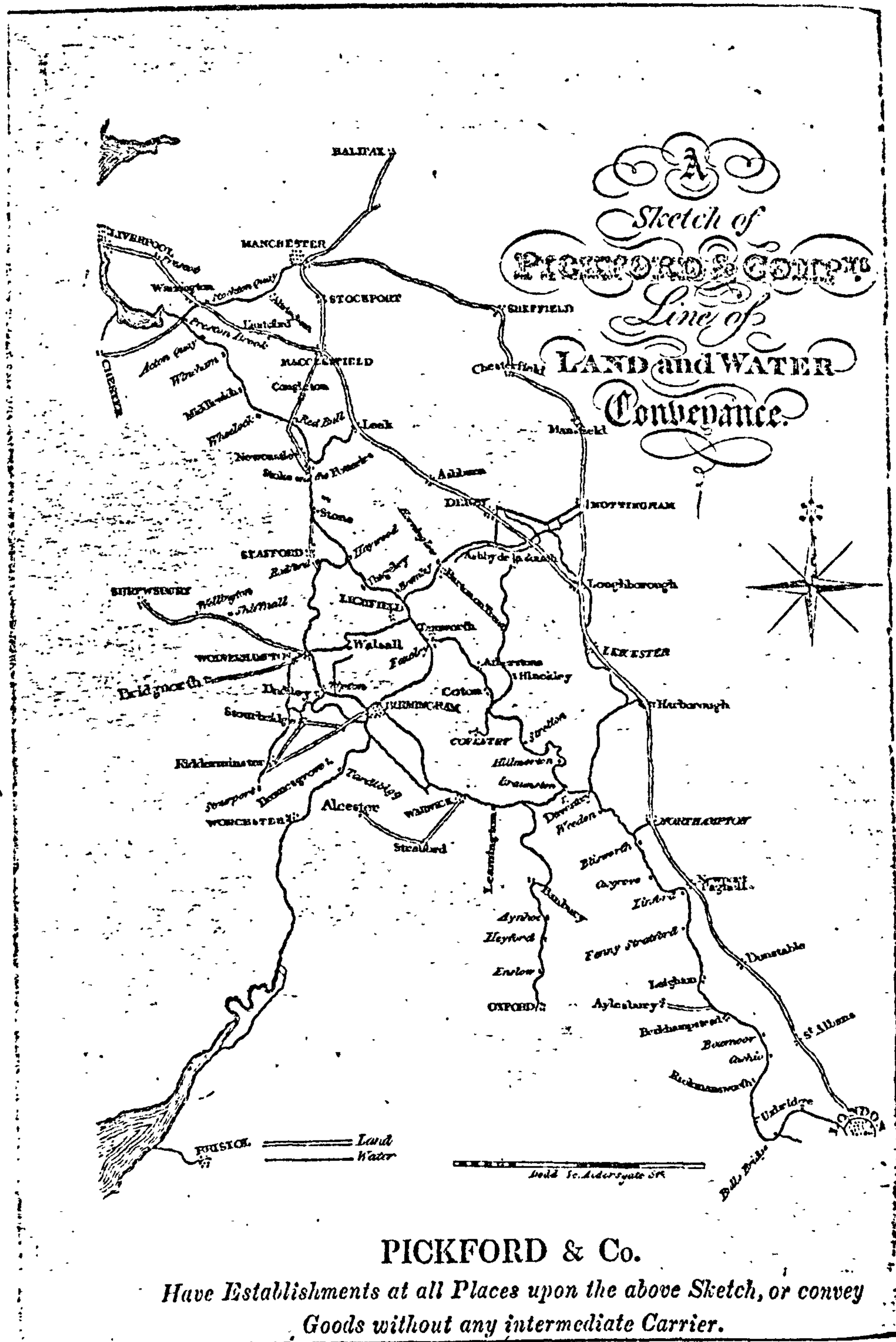
An indication of the structure of working costs for road vehicles is provided by an analysis of Pickfords' waggons, two a day in each direction, between Manchester and Sheffield, calculated in September 1835.³⁰

<u>Cost of operation</u>	<u>aggregate expenses per annum</u>		
Waggoners' wages	£650.	0.	0.
Horsekeepers' wages	£293.	16.	0.
Mileage of waggons	£319.	16.	0.
Rent	£69.	12.	0.
Tolls	£1123.	4.	0.
Total	£2456.	8.	0.

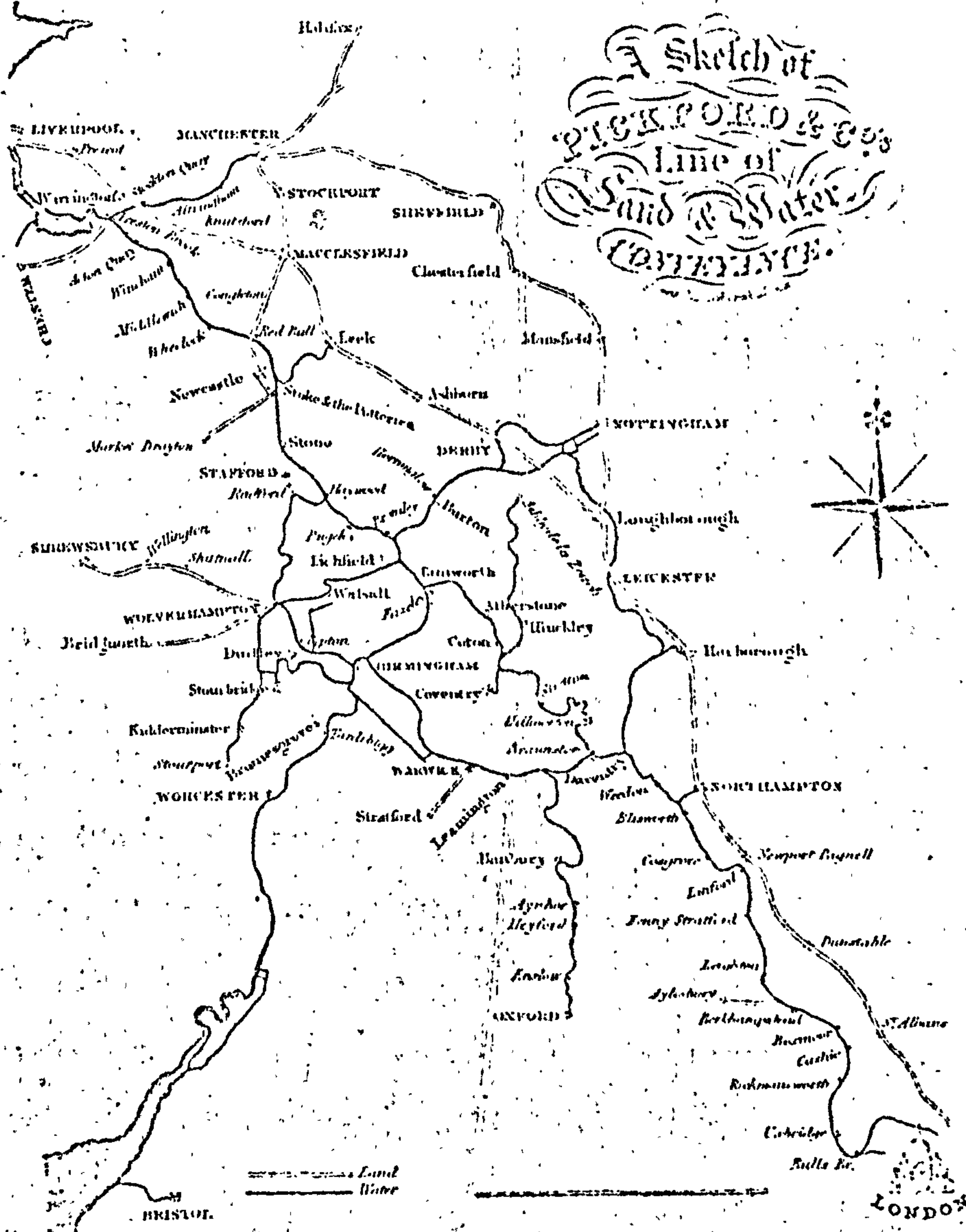
The omission of any allowance for the supply and feeding of horses, maintenance and other charges, means that these figures cannot be taken as an accurate statement of all working costs. As they

30 Memo book Pic 4/7.

Pickfords' services by land and water, 1829



Pickfords' services by land and water, 1832



PICKFORD & Co.

*Have Establishments at all Places on the above Sketch,
or convey Goods without any intermediate Carrier.*

stand, the most striking feature is the high proportion represented by toll charges, approximately forty per cent.³¹

Throughout these years, then, road haulage by waggon as well as by van remained a distinct and independent sphere of operation. But there was also scope for integrating road transport services with those provided by canals and also, for a short time, railways. Only occasionally could road challenge canal over any distance,³² and railways not at all. The accompanying maps of Pickfords' services published in 1829³³ and 1832³⁴, show that short road links to canal wharfs were common. Chester, Shrewsbury, Bridgnorth, Stafford, Aylesbury, were all joined by road to the canal system. The wharf at Stoke, on the Trent & Mersey canal, was the focus of road links to Leek and Macclesfield. In 1815 a cart left Leek each week for Stoke³⁵ and from about 1820 Macclesfield was the departure point for a daily waggon, carrying both passengers and goods, which passed through Congleton and Newcastle en route to Stoke.³⁶ In some cases road transport was fully integrated with the canal trade in that certain canal rates were quoted as inclusive of collection and delivery at the place of origin or destination. This included traffic conveyed from wharfs on the Grand Junction canal to Warwick and traffic from Rugely, near Stafford, to Manchester. Similarly traffic between Radford,

31 Unfortunately very few records survive of turnpike trusts around Manchester. Some payments, for 1818, are recorded in the accounts of the Manchester and Wilmslow Trust, but the entries are for total sums paid only.

32 See below chap. 8.

33 Manchester directory (Pigot) 1829.

34 Manchester directory (Pigot) 1832

35 Commercial directory (Pigot) 1814-15. (Towns and cities of the north of England).

36 Earles, Old Macclesfield p. 184; I. Finney Macklesfelde in ye olden times (Macclesfield, 1873) p.80 who refers to the passenger aspect. Directory of Cheshire (Pigot) 1830, p 35 Macclesfield entry.

on the Staffordshire & Worcester canal, and Bristol, Liverpool, London and Manchester included collection and delivery to and from Stafford, the nearest town and the presumed destination of the goods.³⁷

It was not until the later 1830s that Pickfords' road services were seriously affected by railways. The facilities provided by the Liverpool & Manchester railway were absorbed with the little difficulty. Sheffield goods which had previously been sent on from Manchester 'by caravan, waggon and canal' were now 'forwarded to Liverpool by the railway'.³⁸ Pickfords was soon paying the Liverpool & Manchester railway company £200 a month for its van and Sheffield goods from Liverpool and received the use of a warehouse from the company free of charge.³⁹

As a short, isolated line the Liverpool & Manchester railway was absorbed quite easily into the existing structure of services.

When, however, long lines of rail were brought into use, railway competition began to bite sharply. Toll receipts on the Ashbourne to Leek turnpike reached their peak in 1837, but the trustees were already casting an anxious look at the future. Anticipating "a considerable decrease...in the rents on letting the tolls...in consequence of the railroads intended shortly to be opened," they decided to offer rebates if any stage-coaches were taken off.⁴⁰ This was in June 1837, a month before the Grand Junction railway between Liverpool and Birmingham was

37 Pic 4/8 passim.

38 Sheffield directory (Gell) 1825, p.178; Sheffield directory (White) 1833 p 143.

39 Evidence of A. Comber, fifth report SC on Railway Communication pp 1840 (Vol. XIII) QQ.3729-3733.

40 A.E. & E.M. Dodd, 'The old road from Ashbourne to Leek' Transactions of the North Staffordshire Field Club Vol.LXXXVIII (1948-9) p.56.

opened for traffic. Pickfords was also assessing the effects of railways, especially on the vans whose main advantage, speed, was about to be nullified. Accordingly in June 1837 Pickfords put its London van horses up for sale: "twenty remarkably fine, powerful, young, fresh, good-actioned, short-legged horses, in beautiful condition...just taken off their well-known London, Manchester and Liverpool van, in consequence of the intended opening of the railroad from Liverpool to Birmingham."⁴¹ The van horses at Leicester were also sold.⁴² However this action proved to be slightly precipitate. Conditions on the Grand Junction railway were apparently rather confused in the early days, and some of Pickfords' clients, bullion merchants in particular, preferred to continue using the vans. "We therefore were under the necessity of continuing our vans three days in the week, and regretted that we had abandoned them at all."⁴³ But this was a short-term measure at best. When the London & Birmingham railway was opened early the following year, a through-route was available between London, Liverpool and Manchester. Pickfords' vans were finally taken off in May 1838. In 1840 the trustees of the Ashbourne to Leek turnpike offered reduced tolls to Pickfords, among others, in an effort to hold up sagging receipts.⁴⁴

The vans were thus quickly superseded but, unlike some of the coach proprietors, Baxendale did not try to oppose the railways. Moreover this was not quite the end of road transport,

41 The Times, 20 June 1837; this was the second half of a 40 horse job lot. See prior advertisement The Times 14 June 1837.

42 Copeland Roads and their traffic, p 189.

43 Baxendale's evidence, SC on Railroad Communications pp 1837-8 (Vol. XVI) Q.1136.

44 Dodd Op.cit. p 57.

since the piecemeal way in which the rail network was brought into use over the next three or four years left many temporary gaps which could be filled by road services. In May 1841, for example, a van was put on from Stoke to connect with the railway network at Birmingham⁴⁵ and another, about the same time, between Derby and Manchester.⁴⁶ The accompanying maps of Pickfords' services published in 1839,⁴⁷ 1841 and 1844⁴⁸ shows the flexibility with which Pickfords' road vehicles were switched as changing circumstances required. The main scope was in the provision of temporary road links to towns like Bradford, Doncaster, Warwick, Northampton, Maidstone, and Canterbury which still lacked branch lines or, in the case of the north-east route to Scotland, an extension to the line of rail in use at any time. Pickfords continued to operate road waggons in the north until the Berwick-Newcastle section of the line, opened in July, 1847, completed the route.⁴⁹

By the later 1840s, therefore, Pickfords' long distance road haulage services had come to an end. However road transport did not disappear. Indeed if anything the effect of railways was greatly to strengthen the demand for such facilities, but in the restricted context of urban cartage. The revival of long-distance road transport awaited the development of motor transport at the end of the century.

- 45. Commencing 17 May 1841, G. Neville to W. Lewis 15 May 1841 Pic HH.
- 46 Derby directory (Glover) (taken 1842, published 1843) p.158.
- 47 Pic 4/3, source unknown: Chap. 9 below, following p221
- 48 CHP 28 and 29; Chap. 9 below, following p 221
- 49 Glasgow Post Office directory 1847/8 p. 139.

CHAPTER 8

THE AGE OF CANALS

By 1817 the canal side of Pickfords' business was firmly based. In the use of contractors for the supply of horses, and some boats, the principles applied in road-haulage, of meeting internally only a part of the firm's capital needs, were repeated. Pickfords owned about eighty boats in 1817 and hired about a dozen more, a small proportion of the total in use. Moreover the hiring of boats was quickly phased out. Reliance on horse contractors was much more extensive and long-lasting; until 1825 Pickfords owned no boat horses at all. All the firm's canal work, which was chiefly centred along the route between Manchester and London, was contracted out. One man, Samuel Lea, contracted for fifteen different stages, a total of 868 miles.¹ Lea, a wealthy man on his own account, also acted as Pickfords' agent at Braunston.

From about 1820 Pickfords supplied more of its needs directly. Not only was the hiring of boats stopped, but the entire stock of canal boats was extensively overhauled. In the year 1821-2, Pickfords owned eighty-three boats, of which seventy six were classed as old and seven only as new. During the next five years, Pickfords disposed of eighty boats and built sixty-nine new ones, the bulk of them (fifty) between 1822 and 1824.² All new boats had to be registered with the canal companies to measure their tonnage displacement for toll purposes. The Grand Junction canal boat register recorded

1. These details of working are shown by the payments recorded in Pic.4/4, Journal of the Manchester Office, 1817-22. The entries for June 1817, p. 7, give a complete break-down of the names of contractors, the length of stages, etc. The stages listed are chiefly on the line Manchester to London, with some side-shoots to Leicester and Worcester. Contractors were paid 10d per double mile per horse. The same source also shows that by 1822 Pickfords were no longer hiring any boats.
2. Baxendale's note-book, Details of boats, etc. F.P.

thirteen of Pickfords' boats in 1822, and a further twenty-five the following year.³ The primary purpose of this rebuilding seems to have been straight replacement of stock since numbers were held stable at about eighty-five to ninety boats for the rest of that decade. Since the new boats probably had a higher loading factor than those they replaced, there would be, as a secondary effect, some addition to aggregate capacity. A second, lesser phase of building, in 1830 and 1834-5, seems to have represented a conscious policy of expansion as net additions to stock pushed the total up to 116 trading boats by 1838.⁴

There is no evidence as to the purpose of these changes. Possibly a desire for self-sufficiency, and thus a tighter control of the working machine, dictated Pickfords' decision to build up its own stock of horses, as well as expanding its supply of boats. A first purchase of 110 horses in 1825 was increased to 150 the following year. That remained the total until 1835, when, in a second spurt, it jumped to 320 and on to a peak of 398 in 1838.⁵ It is impossible to say what significance, if any, lay behind these sudden increases in numbers.

The growth of Pickfords' trading capacity was accompanied by increased investment in wharfs, warehouses, and other premises for its expanding canal trade. Premises were taken at Birmingham and Diglis from the Worcester & Birmingham canal company,⁶

3 Grand Junction Canal Boat Register, 1821-23, GJC 4/2. Other volumes for 1818 and 1830-2 survive, but contain no reference to Pickfords.

4 Deed of Arrangement, Schedule Two, 3 May 1838, KS/2/2.

5 Pic 4/25 p. 73, Statement of number of horses returned for assessed taxes, 1822-66.

6 WOBC 1/8, 13 Dec. 1822, 10 March 1826, 9 Oct. 1829; 1/9, 12 Aug. 1836.

and extra accommodation at the terminals of the Warwick & Birmingham canal.⁷ The horizon of Pickfords' operations widened to take in canal routes hitherto unused. It was apparently not until 1825, for example, that Pickfords first traded on the Staffordshire & Worcester canal,⁸ one of the earliest to be built. In addition, several of the new canals opened after 1820 affected Pickfords' organisation. The Macclesfield canal, for example, opened in November 1831, provided a more convenient route into Manchester than that by way of Preston Brook and the Bridgewater canal and was quickly adopted. The Grand Junction canal company agreed to extend to the new route the 20% commission already allowed on Manchester goods declared by way of Preston Brook,⁹ but the question remains as to how far this would compensate for the loss to Pickfords on its establishments on the previous route, and the cost of providing facilities on the new line. The Gloucester & Berkeley canal, strictly a ship canal, opened in 1827, was likewise promptly adopted by Pickfords for its trade between Worcester and Bristol,¹⁰ but the Birmingham & Liverpool Junction canal, perhaps the most ambitious of the last generation of canals, was apparently little used.¹¹

In London the most important development was the opening of the Regents canal in August 1820, by which the focus of the

7 WBC 1/10, 2 April, 10 May, 11 Oct. 1824; 16 Nov., 12 Dec. 1825; 13 Feb, 8 May, 11 Dec. 1826.

8 STW 1/5, 11 Oct. 1825, is the first reference to Pickfords in this company's minutes, though the names of other carriers appear regularly. In 1826 Pickfords licenced only three boats on the canal.

9 GJC 1/5 8 Feb. 1832.

10 Hadfield Canals of west midlands p. 118; ^{CHP} /30. ^{CHP} /30/1.

11 Appendix D, Transcript of tonnage journal, March 1836, in W. Cubitt, A Second report on the financial state of the Birmingham and Liverpool Junction canal, with an appendix July 1836. F.P.

canal trade shifted from Paddington, the terminus of the Grand Junction canal, to the new canal company's more central basin at City Road. The Regents canal company valued Pickfords' business so highly that, as an inducement to move to City Road, it bought out Pickfords' lease at Paddington and in addition allowed Pickfords £5,000 towards the £20,000 cost of new buildings there.¹² Pickfords moved from Paddington in December 1820 and for the next twenty years or so City Basin stood at the centre of Pickfords' organisation. As well as being the main depot for Pickfords' canal trade, it served as the headquarters of the total concern when Baxendale made the move from Manchester. In addition to wharfs, warehouses, loading bays, and a special cut from the main line of the canal, extensive administrative offices were built from which contact with all the agencies and depots was maintained. In February 1824 many of the buildings were gutted by fire¹³ but the property was well insured,¹⁴ and soon rebuilt on the same scale and principles.¹⁵ By about 1830, Pickfords' canal boats travelled over a wide area of England, within well established limits, giving a geographical spread of transport services which was not basically altered until the advent of railways.

12 For Pickfords' relations with the Regent canal company, see GJC1/1, 5 March 1818; RGC 1/14, 18 Feb., 25 March, 1, 8 April 1818; 1/16 16 July, 29 Dec., 1819; 1/18, 12 May, 6, 14 June, 19 July, 13 Dec. 1820. Also Pic 3/20, Case and opinion of Counsel, re acquisition by the Regents canal company of the premises at Paddington, 1/1 1851.

13 The Courier, 27 Feb. 1824

14 In 1821-2, City Basin was insured with the Norwich Union for £25,750 Pic. 4/4, Journal, Manchester Office, p 512.

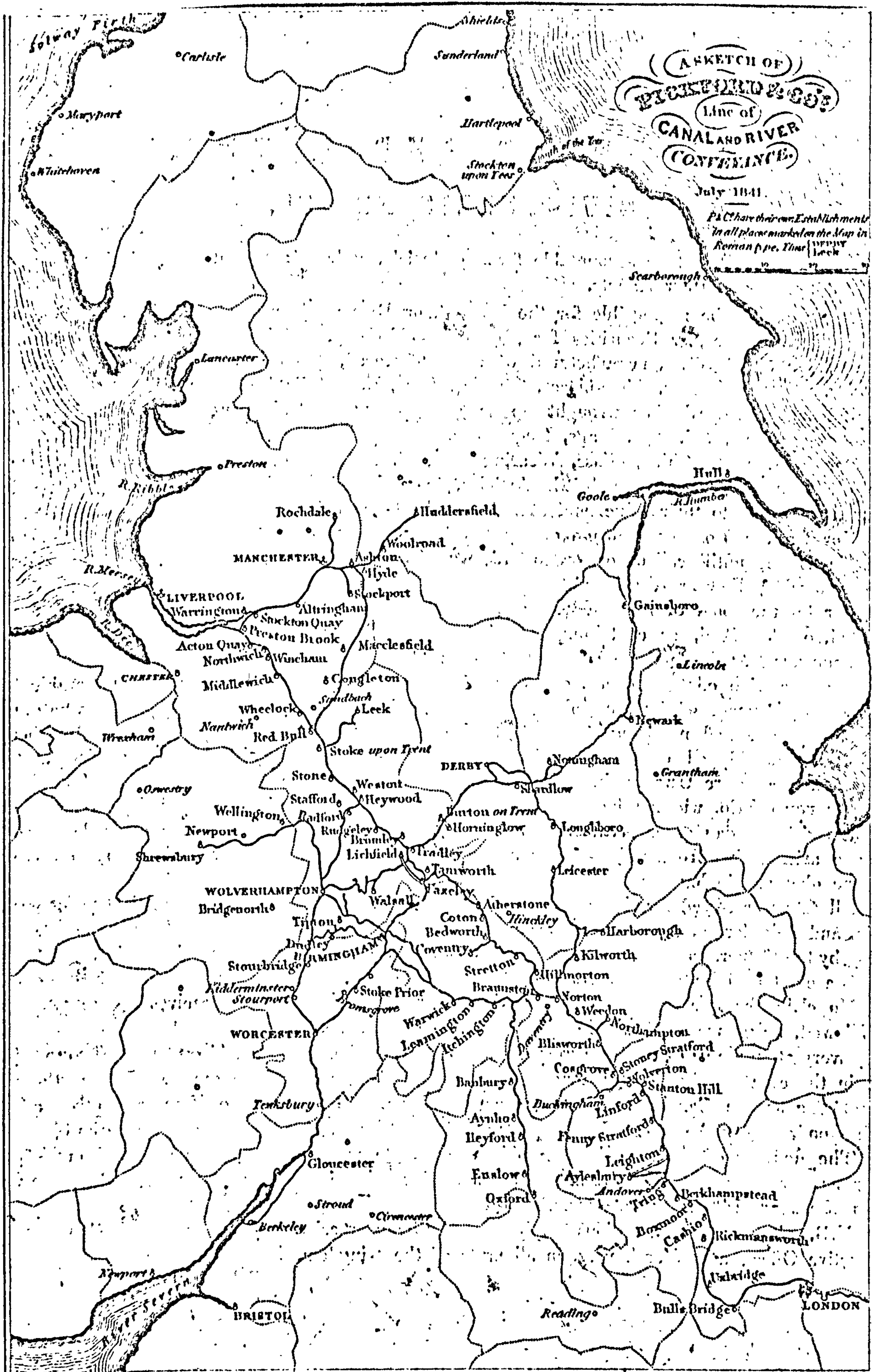
15 The Penny Magazine, August 1842, pp 327-8.

The organisation of canal traffic was highly complex.¹⁶ The optimum would be a continuous flow of traffic sufficient to fill all boats to capacity, which in the case of Pickfords' boats launched in 1822-3 varied between twenty-five and twenty-six tons. The minimum economic loading in the late 1830s was about fifteen tons.¹⁷ Working policy was to avoid breaking bulk, for it was this which sent costs soaring and heightened the chance of loss or damage. Full through-loads which could be trunked direct to their destination undisturbed were highly desirable but, in Pickfords' experience, represented a relatively small proportion of the total tonnage between London, the midlands and the north. The bulk of Pickfords' traffic was of an intermediate kind, which came on to the main north-south route from east and west. This was directed to certain staging points, sorted, and thence dispatched to its destination. Cross-traffic of this kind was tricky to organise, and required very clear methods of procedure. According to Baxendale a cargo of fifteen tons might involve up to 150 consignees and thus the same number of invoices. Here was a potential source of chaos. To ensure that cross-flows were promptly and accurately directed, constant care and supervision was necessary.

Pickfords channelled traffic to and from the west midlands and west of England through Braunston, then a thriving canal town, which stood at the junction of the Oxford and the Grand Junction canals. At Napton, nearby, the Oxford canal connected

16 This discussion of the organisation of canal traffic is based on Baxendale's discussion with directors of the Grand Junction railway company, GJR 1/1, 21 Sept. 1836; also Diary of Josiah Baxendale, accompanying his son Joseph on a tour of Pickfords' canal boat stations, 27 Sept to 13 Oct, 1821. Pic 4/26.

17 Baxendale's evidence, second report, SC on Railways PP 1839 (Vol. X) Q.2515.



with the Warwick canals, giving entry to Birmingham and the west. Situated on the north-south line and with easy access to the west, Braunston was in many ways the focal point of the canal network of the south midlands. The central position of Braunston took on a critical function for Pickfords' working methods. A regular schedule of fly-boats from the many towns and cities from which Pickfords operated required the dispatch of boats with only partial loads if necessary. This was feasible because, in addition to picking up some goods en route, sufficient cargo to complete a load could be ensured at Braunston and similar places. This was particularly important for boats departing from London, as the balance of traffic tended to be up to the capital. At Braunston, additional goods could be taken on or the boat taken off completely and its contents distributed between other boats.¹⁸

Traffic from the east of the country was assembled at Shardlow, the termination of the Trent & Mersey canal at its junction with the river Trent. Although predominantly a canal concern, Pickfords had a small interest in river traffic. A few of the large Trent boats and, at a later date, establishments at Newark, Gainsborough and Hull,¹⁹ were the means by which the firm was able to draw on the river system of the east midlands. Similarly in the west, Pickfords had some interest in traffic on the river Severn, between Worcester and Bristol.

Canal carriers gained a reputation for great regularity in the performance of their business - in 1840 supporters of the

- 18 Josiah Baxendale, in his Diary, emphasised the special role of Braunston in Pickfords' organisation.
- 19 CHP/28 A sketch of Pickford & Co.'s Line of Canal and River Conveyance, July 1841; Glasgow Post Office directory, 1849-50 Appendix p 149, Pickfords' advertisement refers to carriage on the Trent and Humber.

canal interest claimed that from the time their goods reached the carrier in Manchester, they could calculate to within a few hours their time of arrival in London.²⁰ But this achievement has to be seen within the context of certain constraints. The high cost and high loading factor of the typical canal boat rendered it not only an unwieldy unit of transportation but made continuous employment of the capital invested in it both necessary and difficult. Capacity could be maximised by reducing delays, shortening turn-round times, and maintaining a keen regard to working efficiency. Swifter journey times would also allow the more intensive use of stock. To facilitate this, canal companies introduced at an early date a special system of licences whereby, on payment of the prescribed charge, carriers were allowed to pass a given number of boats through the company's locks by night. Payments could be made per boat-journey, or as an annual composition on an agreed number of boats. Pickfords had already composited with the Coventry canal company for fifty boats in 1808, and continued the arrangement for as long as licences remained in use. Similar agreements were made with the chief companies of the canal network. Such measures, however, were inevitably negative whenever the canals were closed by frost in winter or the annual stoppage in the summer. Manufacturers could build up stocks in anticipation of such occurrences but essential supplies could only be had by land carriage, at the appropriate prices.

20 Fifth Report and evidence S.C. on Railway Communications pp 1840 (Vol. XIII), evidence of several merchants, especially Mr. Alderman Lainson, Q.1795.

Canal transport was thus of itself subject to certain limitations. In addition no carrier could, as a general rule, afford to carry sufficient reserves to meet all temporary shifts in demand, and even the most efficient carrier was unable immediately to cope with a sudden rush of traffic.²¹ Given notice, boats could be called in from elsewhere, but this took time. Even if traffic were dispatched in strict order of arrival, delay was as inevitable as the consequent complaints from disappointed customers. Bearing in mind the sharp shifts in the trade cycle in the 1820s and the continuing fluctuations in the 1830s, it is difficult to see what else the carrier could do. Experience must have shown that upsurges in trade were rarely sustained and a reliable, rising trend, sufficient to justify further capital investment, difficult to detect. In these circumstances cautious expansion of capacity, such as the slow increase in Pickfords' stock of canal boats after 1830, was, contrary to the accusations of inertia frequently levelled against the canal carriers, sound business sense. Consequently, an increase in the supply of canal services, in terms of aggregate capacity, was inevitably in the form of a lagged response to a sustained increase in demand. As a result, demand probably persistently exceeded supply, chronically so in short-run boom conditions. It is difficult to see how the canal carriers could have escaped from this dilemma without rashly exposing themselves, but it provided their opponents with a convenient stick with

21 For a general discussion of the difficulties of canal operation see, A. Rees, The Cyclopaedia (in 39 volumes, 1819-20), article 'Canal', Vol. VI (1819); T. Boyle Hope for the Canals (1848) written with reference to railway competition. Jackman's discussion, Transportation in Modern England p 440 ff, leans heavily on Boyle. J. Hassell Tour of the Grand Junction (1819) is also of interest.

to beat them.²²

In the controversy between canals and railways, the canal carriers were accused of restrictive practices and collusion, in particular of keeping their rates a close secret, charging differentially according to category of customer rather than type of traffic, and rigging the market by agreeing not to underquote a competitor. Because carriers quoted virtually the same rates, it does not necessarily mean, however, that competition was lacking; it was prosecuted by way of service rather than price.²³ Custom was attracted by offering traders inducements other than price reductions, such as varying the length of time accounts could be left unsettled, allowing discount for the prompt settlement of accounts, carrying empties and samples free of charge, or allowing free storage for goods awaiting collection for up to forty-eight hours or more.²⁴ The firm with the best name for efficiency and prompt attention to business, together with the financial resources to sustain such accommodation, attracted the most custom.²⁵ The merchant sending goods off regularly, therefore, tended to use one carrier and could use his trading account with him to extract favourable terms. These are likely to have been more rewarding to him than occasional rushes of rate-cutting.

22 The allegations made by the promoters of the Liverpool & Manchester railway on that score are well known. My colleague Dr. M.C. Reed points out that in the changed economic conditions of 1826, when boom had given way to slump, these complaints were dropped. No doubt the fact that the Bridgewater trustees had by then come to terms with the railway company also had a part in this. F.C. Mather After the Canal Duke p. 38 ff.

23 Boyle Op.cit. p. 24 ff; Mather Op. cit. p. 106.

24 It was chiefly through concessions of this kind that the canal carriers later tried to compete with the railways, since they could not hope to offer directly competitive rates. Consequently they were singled out for attack when carriers sought agreements with the railway companies.

25 See the memos on the canal companies' and canal carriers' working methods and charges, HL2/6 R47, 11 Sept. 1838.

The parallel rates structure of various carriers is demonstrated by a set of figures drawn up by the Peak Forest canal company in 1839, partly to illustrate the effect railways had had on canal rates. Rates were given for three carriers, Pickfords, Kenworthy & Co., and Robins & Co., but the sample of quotations for all three firms is limited to only six categories of goods. Of these identical charges were made by all three for two categories and Pickfords and Kenworthy were identical for two more: of the remaining two categories, Pickfords and Robins agreed on one, and Kenworthy and Robins agreed on the other. A more revealing series is for Kenworthy and Robins alone. Comparative charges were given for twenty-six categories of goods: before the railways, twenty-two of these had been identical, but the number had by then been reduced to twelve.²⁶ A bland gloss on these figures would be that they simply show how the free working of perfect competition had reduced rates to their lowest remunerative level. There is some evidence, however, which, although possibly quite innocuous, would cast suspicion on such close identity. A note in a manuscript book of Pickfords' canal rates, of the period 1828-36, reads "In the event of any goods offering for conveyance that are not provided for by a specific rate, no agent of the parties to have power to state terms, except in concert with agents of the other carriers, nor under any circumstances should such authority be exercised if there is time to correspond with the principals."²⁷

26 PFC 1/4, 27 March 1839

27 Pic 4/8, pp 57-8.

By discharging his transport requirements through a single carrier a merchant could enormously simplify his book-keeping problems. Not so the carrier, who faced a highly complex and onerous burden on this score. The principles of canal charges, sufficiently intricate in themselves, were further complicated by the need, in the case of through routes and rates for example, to engage in protracted negotiations with each company concerned. Reluctant to commit itself unilaterally, each company would agree to a proposed alteration of rates and the appropriate apportionment, provided that all other companies concerned acted likewise. The absence of any type of clearing-house, either for processing routine traffic or regulating through-traffic agreements of this kind, resulted in this cumbersome and tedious procedure. Instead of being able to discharge their tonnage payments through a central agency, the carriers were obliged to keep a separate account for each canal used, in Pickfords' case probably twenty or more different sets of accounts.

The administration of these accounts was extremely complicated. Over and above the basic schedule of charges there was an intricate system of drawbacks, special rates or reductions in favour of particular routes or particular categories of goods, some purely temporary, others on traffic in one direction only. Not only were there disputes about over-charging by the canal companies or false declarations by the carrier, but the figures on the basis of which accounts were rendered were often neither complete nor compatible. The confusion got worse as time went

on, so that, as Pickfords wrote to the Oxford canal company in 1832, "the canal accounts are now becoming so complex that it is difficult to know where we stand - some things being charged different rates, according as they are coming up or going down - and in some cases where a reduction is made, part of the goods are charged the reduced rate and part the full rate in the tonnage accounts leaving a portion to be obtained by way of overcharges, and again some allowances are made from statements furnished by us and some from accounts rendered by other canal co's ..." ²⁸ In this situation it is not surprising that Pickfords was finding the cost of keeping the tonnage accounts in order "no light tax upon the drawbacks." ²⁹

One of the most persistent and difficult problems the canal carriers had to deal with was the pilfering of goods from the boats and wharfs. The boatmen, like the river men before them, ³⁰ enjoyed a singularly unsavoury reputation. "A vile set of rogues", Lea, Pickfords' agent at Braunston called them: his idea of industrial relations was to turn out the police against strikers, and clap a few of the leaders in Newgate. ³¹ Inman too, giving evidence to the parliamentary committee enquiring into the observance of the Sabbath, expressed grave doubts about the state of the boatmen's morals and said that Pickfords had to take precautions against the men's thieving. ³²

The control of an undisciplined work force, in particular its penchant for theft, was thus no less a problem for the canal

28 In-Letter Book, OXC4/63, 13 March 1832.

29 In-Letter Book, OXC4/61, 24 Dec. 1830.

30 Dubbed, "inland pirates" by E. Meteyard, Life of Josiah Wedgewood. (1865-6), Vol. I, p 275.

31 Lea to Langton, 22 Oct. 1818, Lea to Pickford & Co., London, 23 Oct. 1818. F.P.

32 Report and evidence S.C. on the Observance of the Sabbath Day pp 1831-2, (Vol. VII), Q.1990 ff.

carriers than their counterparts in manufacturing. It was a long-standing and continuous problem. Matthew Pickford was approached in 1798 by the Birmingham canal company for his assistance in discovering the identity of three of his men seen throwing coping stones into the canal off a road bridge near Fazeley, apparently in an effort to block the channel.³³ Similar instances recur in the records of the canal companies during this period. The companies often found that their own employees were associates of the boatmen, acting as receivers to dispose of the ill-gotten gains. Probably the most spectacular 'incident' in Pickfords' experience was one which happened in March 1809 involving a boat which left Paddington with a mixed cargo of goods including various barrels of brandy, rum, and gun-powder. In search of a nightcap, two of the crew tackled one of the barrels with a gimlet and no doubt a lantern to light the good work. Unfortunately they chose the wrong barrel, blew up themselves and the boat, and set fire to three hay stacks on the canal bank for good measure.³⁴

Pilfering was particularly difficult to eliminate. Matthew Pickford approached the Grand Junction company in 1798 with an unspecified plan to combat the problem,³⁵ but although the committee declared its support for his ideas nothing seems

33 Out-Letter Book, BCN 4/371 B, 15 June 1798.

34 The Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. LXXIX (1809) p 372. Pickford's services were also used for the conveyance of emigrant labour from the south of England to the industrial towns of the north under the auspices of the Poor Law removal scheme of the later 1830s. A. Redford Labour migration in England 1815-50 (2nd. ed. 1964) pp 105-6. R. Boyson The Ashworth cotton enterprise (Oxford 1970) p 190.

35 GJC 1/39, 4 April, 1798.

immediately to have come of this initiative. Eventually an organisation was set up, with the somewhat ponderous title 'Inland Navigation: Association for Apprehending and Prosecuting Felons.' In the name of all the leading carriers, various monetary rewards were offered for information leading to prosecutions.³⁶ The joint action indicates the wide-spread nature of this problem and the oblique attack on it, by recourse to a system of informers, demonstrates the great difficulty of effectively policing goods in transit. Although such measures might contain the problem, they would scarcely eliminate it. Pickfords, indeed, by the 1830s had devised a much tighter means of control. Under this scheme the boatmaster, whether as normal practice or special occasion only is unknown, was held responsible by a legally binding contract for all goods in his charge until he had delivered his cargo. If it was not intact, the loss was set off against Pickfords' payment to him. The effectiveness of this step is suggested by the fact that, in the court of Exchequer, an appeal was made against Pickfords' enforcing one such contract, and that the appeal failed.³⁷

Theft was not confined to the boatmen, however: the clerical staff presented equal problems of embezzlement. Pickfords followed the custom of requiring sureties from anyone handling cash, but this was only partially successful; guarantors did not always stand up to the test. Offences of this kind were savagely punished, with transportation the common penalty for

36 The Derby Mercury 14 Oct. 1802; 21 June 1804.

37 Cleworth v. Pickford (Court of Exchequer, 1840) See E.B. Ivatts Carriers' Law, relating to goods and passenger traffic on railways, canals and steam ships, with cases (1883) p. 444.

even trivial sums. Improved accounting, by increasing the chances of detection, might limit the likelihood of embezzlement, but Pickfords was long troubled by it. In 1837 one of the firm's Liverpool staff was found to have embezzled over £750.³⁸ One undetected embezzler, troubled in conscience in his old age, desired to make restitution and sent Pickfords a £50 note, sufficient to cover "the amount of your property improperly applied, together with interest thereon."³⁹ At one point Baxendale considered protecting himself against embezzlement by requiring all clerks with access to cash to insure themselves with a special Guarantee Society, but the idea came to nothing.⁴⁰

The canal carriers, therefore, were confronted by many problems intrinsic to the canal trade. But there were also many forces pressing on the canal trade from the outside. Raw materials like coal, stone, lime and grain, comprised the main bulk of canal traffic. Long distance traffic, the needs of which were met by the 'fly-trade' in which Pickfords specialised, was chiefly composed of the lighter range of merchandise. Heavy merchandise usually went by sea. This division,⁴¹ however, was never absolute, and throughout the period under consideration canal transport was pressed by other forms of transportation.

The integration of land and canal has already been discussed. Competition between road and canal conveyance, although uncommon, increased after 1815 as improved road conditions fostered speedier road haulage. Direct competition was usually restricted to short-haul traffic. For example, in 1825, Pickfords

38 Pic. 4/27, p. 11, p. 12.

39 Pic. 4/1, p. 58.

40 At F.P. are the prospectus of the society, and an unfavourable report on it, by Baxendale's solicitors. Although he apparently did not introduce the scheme, notices of general meetings for 1845 and 1848 show that Baxendale had 100 shares in the society.

41 As outlined in PFC 1/4, 27 March 1839.

introduced a road link between Birmingham and Kidderminster, in direct competition with the Staffordshire & Worcester canal over the short distance involved.⁴² A relatively rare example of longer distance competition did occur between London and Leicester. In 1828 Messrs. Deacon, Harrison & Co., started a regular service of road waggon at a charge no higher than canal rates and presumably at comparable, possibly swifter speeds. Baxendale reacted by seeking to cut Pickfords' canal rates by ten shillings per ton and applied to the canal companies for comparable reductions in tolls to enable him and other carriers take this step. The Grand Union canal company, more vulnerable to the loss of such traffic, readily agreed but the Grand Junction company, which enjoyed a firmer traffic-base, needed more persuasion. At length it was agreed to extend to Leicester traffic, for an experimental period of three months, the existing preferences allowed on goods declared for places north of the Trent. The experiment was subsequently continued for a further three months, and the concessions extended to include traffic to Market Harborough, but there is no sign that the waggon were driven off.⁴³ Indeed the competitive position of the canals in that area seems to have deteriorated further, since in 1835 both the Leicester and Loughborough canal companies were being outbid for traffic to and from Birmingham by road transport.⁴⁴

At much the same time some of Pickfords' canal trade between London and Oxford was being lost to competitors using the Thames

⁴² Hadfield Canals of west Midlands, p. 130.

⁴³ GJC 1/4, 3 Dec., 30 Dec., 1828, 18 March 1829; GUC 1/2 19 Dec., 1828.

⁴⁴ Hadfield Canals of east Midlands, p. 82.

Navigation, with the support of road haulage connections.

Early in 1828 Pickfords suggested to the Regents canal company that, to combat this, the company should cut its rates in line with reductions already made by the Oxford and Grand Junction canal companies. Investigation revealed that the measures referred to by Pickfords were not of recent date, and as neither of the other two companies intended any further step to meet this particular contingency, the Regents canal company felt it could not damage itself by making a unilateral reduction.⁴⁵ The loss of traffic continued and from 1830 onwards Pickfords repeatedly pressed the Oxford canal company in particular for improved facilities,⁴⁶ but without success.

In its approach to the Oxford canal company one of the points raised by Pickfords was the threat posed by the appearance of steam-powered coasting vessels. Steamers were introduced between London and Goole early in 1834 and were soon competing successfully for Manchester traffic by providing a swifter service than that of the canal carriers.⁴⁷ Even before the advent of steamers, canals had felt the competition of coasting vessels trading to the rivers Humber and Trent. In 1823 Pickfords and Deacon, Harrison & Co., had received special terms from the Grand Junction company for several categories of heavy groceries declared for Leicester and northwards by way of the river Soar, to meet the competition of coasting vessels coming into Gainsborough.⁴⁸ The introduction of steam-ships between

45 RGC 1/30, 27 Feb., 26 March, 1828; GJC 1/5, 26 July 1832.

46 Out-Letter Book OXC/4/51, 21 Oct., 1831, 4/52, 19 Dec., 1836; In-Letter Book OXC/4/61, 27 Nov., 1830; 4/62, 24 Oct., 1831.

47 In-Letter Book OXC/4/64, 2 Sept. 1834.

48 GJC 1/3, 17 Nov., 1823.

London and Goole brought a new dimension into the situation, one which was not easily countered. Appeals from Pickfords, Bache and Kenworthy for increased co-operation received serious attention from the Grand Junction company, in the realisation that the company's own interests were at stake. What was needed, as with railway competition later, was real inter-company co-operation, something which proved very difficult to achieve. As late as October 1838, in full knowledge that two leading canal carriers had already turned to steamers, a further initiative of the Grand Junction company was frustrated by the non-cooperation of the other companies.⁴⁹

The assertion⁵⁰ that canal companies failed to anticipate railway competition and were quickly brushed aside could no longer be accepted.⁵¹ For example the Rochdale canal company, as early as 1823, took note of the projected railway between Liverpool and Manchester and although the news caused no alarm steps were taken to forestall possible competition from that and other sources. Following the opening of the Liverpool & Manchester railway, the Manchester, Bolton & Bury canal company promptly decided to convert itself into a combined railway and canal company, with the intention of operating both lines as an integrated concern - the canal to take heavy traffic, the railway passengers and merchandise. The Lancaster canal company, too, greeted railway competition very calmly and managed to extract advantage from the situation.⁵²

49 GJC 1/5, 7 Oct., 29 Nov., 1834, 16 Jan., 1835; 1/6, 30 Oct., 1838.

50 J.H.Clapham An economic history of modern Britain (2nd ed. 1934) p. 396.

51 When Clapham wrote the canal company records were not open for study. The published work of Charles Hadfield in particular has done much to revise previous ideas; also F.C. Mather's work on the Bridgewater Trust.

52 C.Hadfield & G. Biddle, The canals of north west England (Newton Abbot 1970) chaps. VIII, IX, X.

However these were all individual companies, acting separately; the canal companies' main failure was their inability to act jointly in opposition to railways. Too much of the companies' activities took the form of strikes against neighbouring canals in defence of narrow, local interests.⁵³ This applied especially to the promotion of through traffic by 'end-on' canal companies. Even when a few companies did combine to promote joint interests, e.g., the Rochdale, Calder & Hebble and Aire & Calder companies in opposition to the Manchester & Leeds railway,⁵⁴ there was always the possibility that one would ditch its partners in order to secure selfish interests.

Canal transport suffered from serious physical defects which were not easily overcome. The piecemeal construction of canals, without standardisation of type or gauge produced the well-known impediments to a free-flow of traffic. As well as problems of trans-shipment, the passage of tunnels and locks was cumbersome and slow. Toll-reductions apart, some canal companies responded by tackling some of the more obvious obstacles to the flow of traffic. Inevitably this was only partial and inadequate. The capital cost of redeveloping the canal network according to a uniform scale would have been enormous assuming the necessary resources could have been found in a capital market which was increasingly looking to an alternative form of transportation. The shortening of the northern arm of the Oxford canal, for example, alone cost over £150,000. Completed in 1834, the need to recoup the capital expended was the

53 Mather After the Canal Duke p. 122 ff; pp. 138-140.

54 Hadfield & Biddle Op.cit. pp. 289-292

justification for repeated refusals to make any further reductions in tolls, even in the face of railway competition.⁵⁵ In the case of the Bridgewater canal, the trustees clearly lacked the resources rather than the will to carry out repairs and improvements. When money was made available, in the late 1820s, substantial improvements were undertaken.⁵⁶ The boldest project of all, the Birmingham & Liverpool Junction canal, intended to demonstrate the superfluity of a railway connection between the two towns,⁵⁷ foundered in the morass of Shelmore Great Bank.⁵⁸ It was extremely costly to build; at approximately £800,000, the capital expended was about half the total spent on the Grand Junction canal thirty years earlier for a canal only a third its length. Opened in March 1835, it enjoyed a brief flurry of activity before it was overtaken by its rival, the Grand Junction railway.

Efforts to reduce journey times included measures to speed up the passage of boats through the locks. Overall journey times were determined as much by the number of locks to be negotiated as the total mileage to be traversed. It took five and a half minutes to raise the water level of a lock by eight feet,⁵⁹ thus making for very slow progress on a canal like the Leeds & Liverpool, with a long flight of locks to the summit. One possibility was to build a parallel flight of locks to double the number of boats which could be accommodated at any one time. This was done by the Bridgewater trustees and the Mersey & Irwell company at Runcorn in the late 1820s,⁶⁰ and by the Oxford canal company

55 Hadfield Canals of east Midlands, pp 161-2; OXC 4/52, Out-Letter Book, 1836-45, passim.

56 Mather Op.cit PP 22-3, p 42, PP 54-6.

57 Hadfield Canals of west Midlands, PP 184-5.

58 L.T.C. Rolt Thomas Telford (1958) PP 182-6; E.S.Richards James Loch and the House of Sutherland p 103 ff, p 120 ff.

59 According to Rees The Cyclopaedia Vol. VI, 'Canal'

60 Hadfield & Biddle Op.cit. PP 289-292

at Hillmorton in 1840.⁶¹ Such measures were costly, prohibitively so at the points where they were most needed. A simple, but apparently effective alternative, adopted by the Grand Junction company in 1833, was to fit extra paddles to the upper gate of a lock to speed the flow of water into it. Using this method boats could be passed through, on a seven foot rise of water, in one and a half minutes. Tests of the new device drew a favourable report from Joseph Baxendale and the decision to extend the system as soon as possible.⁶²

Further progress depended on improvements in motive power, that is, the better use of horses and, in particular, the adaptation of steam-power to canal use. Within the limited context of passenger traffic, speeds of up to ten miles per hour were attained on the Glasgow, Paisley & Johnstone canal, and also on the Lancaster canal,⁶³ by the use of specially designed lightweight boats, hauled by high-quality horses. In this way, the canal, during the 1830s was able to compete with stage-coach and steam-carriage services between Paisley and Glasgow.⁶⁴ Baxendale figured in several experiments, during 1833-4, to apply the same principles to the Grand Junction canal company's passenger traffic between London and Uxbridge.⁶⁵ The results of these trials were inconclusive, and soon had to be abandoned when it became apparent that in their existing condition the canal banks

61 Hadfield Canals of east Midlands p. 161.

62 GJC 1/5, 24 June 1833.

63 (G.C.Clark) Lancaster records, or leaves from local history 1801-1850 (1869) p. 212.

64 J. Lindsay The canals of Scotland (Newton Abbot, 1968) p. 92 ff. Passenger traffic in the Manchester area is fully discussed by Hadfield & Biddle Op. cit. passim.

65 GJC 1/5, 30 Oct., 1832; 15 May, 1 June 1833; 22 July, 19 Aug., 1834; 10 March 1835.

were not strong enough to support the added pressure. This same structural weakness also impeded the use of steam-power on canals in any but a limited context. Intermittent efforts over a period of fifty years repeatedly foundered on this same difficulty.

Experiments with steam-boats were made on the Forth & Clyde canal as early as 1789⁶⁶ and on the Sankey Brook,⁶⁷ the Mersey & Irwell and the Bridgewater in the 1790s.⁶⁸ The main requirement was the direct application of steam to canal boats, but this proved too difficult to achieve. What success there was mainly took the form of steam-powered tugs to pull 'barge-trains', or to shunt boats through the longer canal tunnels. Other ideas included the use of locomotives to haul canal boats, working from a track laid along the canal bank, and even "moving steam-boats by means of an artificial fishes (sic) tail".⁶⁹

Although also a response to competing forms of transportation, the canal carrier's interest in the possibility of steam-power had a logic of its own. Successful innovation of the new technology would represent a powerful and dramatic challenge to the existing structure of the canal trade. The commercial viability of steam-power, therefore, especially in the hands of a rival, required watchful attention. At least these were the terms in which Zachary Langton of Pickfords seems to have construed the position. In 1819 a Mr. Maibon approached Pickfords with an invention for which he clearly made large claims, and seemingly offered Pickfords the monopoly of it. Although

66 Lindsay, Op.cit. p. 26 ff.

67 T.C.Barker and J.R.Harris A Merseyside town in the Industrial Revolution, St. Helens 1750-1900 (Cass Reprint, 1959) p. 193.

68 Hadfield & Biddle Op. cit. pp. 99-100

69 Richards, Op. cit. p. 26. ff.

doubtful that this would be any more successful than previous devices of a similar kind, Langton reckoned he could not afford to ignore it, "for if it should so turn out that he really can perform what he proposes to undertake and that he disposes of his invention to others who may adapt it to canal navigation, a competitor, with such an exclusive right, would be more than we could contend with."⁷⁰

The more sustained experimentation with steam power for several years from the mid-1830s onwards was probably more directly motivated by the onset of railway competition. Pickfords and another carrier, Messrs. Robins, Mills & Co., were involved in a number of trials during this period. Robins & Co. directly promoted experimental work with steam engines⁷¹ but derived little benefit from it. Indeed the firm's finances were soon in a very parlous condition.⁷² A paddle-boat belonging to Robins & Co. was tested on the Macclesfield Canal in 1838 and although reported capable of travelling at five miles per hour, in practice it only managed four miles per hour, a performance in no way superior to that of horses, and without any additional loading factor by way of compensation.⁷³ Pickfords seems to have relied on other people's work, but its experience was much the same. A trial run of a steam-boat hauling a conventional barge⁷⁴ between Manchester and London, in September, 1836, and further trials on the Grand Junction canal in 1842⁷⁵ both failed to produce any significant result.

70 Langton to Matthew Pickford, 4 Sept. 1819, F.P; also Langton to Matthew Pickford, 31 Aug., 1819, Pic. 4/27.

71 GJC 1/6, 18 Nov 1835.

72 Both the Macclesfield and Grand Junction canal companies had occasion to discuss the firm's defaults in tonnage payments MCC 1/2, 8 Sept., 1836, 22 June, 1840; GJC 1/7, 30 May 1839.

73 The Macclesfield Courier and Herald 18 Aug. 1838; also MCC 1/2, 4 Nov 1835.

74 The Macclesfield Courier and Herald 24 Sept. 1836; MCC 1/2, 6 Oct., 1836.

75 S. Salt Statistics and calculations essentially necessary to persons connected with railways or canals (London and Manchester, second edit. 1846) p. 84 quoting from Railway Magazine 30 April 1842; also RGC 1/38, 18 May 1842.

One effect of railways was to show that the interests of the canal carriers and those of the canal companies were far from identical. Although there are examples to the contrary, the canal carriers seem to have responded vigorously to the challenge of railway competition. Between Manchester and Liverpool, the water carriers enjoyed exceptionally favourable circumstances and successfully withstood periodic rate cutting by the railway company. In fact their competition was so successful that, under a traffic-sharing arrangement of 1845 between the Bridgewater trustees and the railway company, not only was the bulk of the traffic allocated to water-transport, but, for a few years, the trustees were obliged to pay substantial compensation for exceeding their quota.⁷⁶ The carriers' ^gaggressiveness was a frequent source of embarrassment to the trustees, who were obliged to take steps to check it.

Firms like Pickfords, Kenworthy and Bache, which carried merchandise traffic over long distances and several canals were far more vulnerable. Their traffic was a prime target for the railway companies and they immediately felt the full force of railway competition. For the carriers their entire business was at stake but to many canal companies on through-routes, especially between Lancashire and London, the carriers' traffic was a relatively small proportion of the total passing along their canal. Consequently they were not so immediately concerned or always so swift in taking the alleviating measures the carriers requested. 'The carriers' main step, even before railway competition was fully effective, was to warn the canal companies that unless they fostered the 'fly-trade' with all speed and at the lowest possible charge it would quickly leave the canals.

76 F.C.Mather "The Duke of Bridgewater's Trustees and the coming of the railways", Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th series, Vol. 14, 1964, p. 143, p. 148 ff.

In particular the carriers campaigned for the abolition of licences,⁷⁷ long resented and a proportionately greater burden as traffic volumes dropped. To the carriers the abolition of licences seems to have been regarded as the critical test by which they judged the real willingness of the canal companies to help them. The Grand Junction and Coventry canal companies had both dropped licences by the end of 1839, but, as always, the Oxford canal company required more persuasion and drew repeated protests from Pickfords before it followed suit.⁷⁸ If the companies, or any one of them, proved unco-operative, there was little the carriers could do, short of abandoning canal transport altogether.

If the canal carriers between Lancashire and London were to meet railway competition it could only have been with the maximum encouragement and assistance of the canal companies, especially in fostering the through-trade. This required that the Trent & Mersey and Oxford canal companies, for example, should abandon their entrenched positions but, until far too late, little effective pressure could be brought to bear on them. Through-traffic was too small a proportion of the total traffic on the two canals for its loss, potential or actual, to be, of itself, a significant bargaining factor. Since toll reductions on the Trent & Mersey in favour of through-traffic would have to be extended to local traffic, the disincentive was even stronger. As James Loch,⁷⁹ agent to the Marquess of Stafford and from 1837 superintendent of the Bridgewater Trust, found out, joint

77 GJC 1/6, 23 July 1838, memorial from Mr. J. Robins, of Robins, Mills & Co.

78 In Letter-book OXC 4/70 14 Jan., 20 Jan., 5 Feb., 1840

79 The works by Richards James Loch and the House of Sutherland and F.C. Mather After the Canal Duke contain a most useful discussion of Loch's experience as agent and manager of the Bridgewater canal.

action of any kind either in the restricted context of through-traffic or a broadly conceived arrangement between canal and railway interests proved impossible to achieve. Loch expressed himself strongly on the blindness of canal managers but he was not himself without fault. Loch refused to participate in the conference of canal companies and carriers, at Birmingham in 1838, (discussed below), chiefly, it would seem, because it might threaten his freedom of action on the Bridgewater.⁸⁰

Declining revenues and dividends eventually forced even the most entrenched canal company to reconsider its position. But until the railway network was widely spread, individual canal companies like the Oxford, for whom railway competition was delayed until 1842, could continue their parochial policies and remain unresponsive to the carriers repeated requests especially for through toll.

The almost total inability of the canal companies to adopt any agreed measures was shown by the failure of two conferences of company representatives and carriers, called to discuss the impact of railways, to produce any practical results.⁸¹ The first conference, at Birmingham in August 1838, broke up with nothing achieved. A schedule of railway freight rates was not yet available and it was decided that in the absence of such information, together with certain difficulties being experienced by the Grand Junction company with its water supply at Tring summit, no steps could be taken except to agree to meet again

80 Mather Op. cit. pp. 200-201

81 The following paragraphs are based on lengthy minutes in the records of the Peak Forest and Macclesfield canal companies. Together with the Ashton company, they sent a joint delegation to discuss the position of canal trade with the companies of the south and midlands. The three were end-on canals, their interests were basically the same and they often acted jointly. PFC 1/4, 30 Jan., 27 March 1839; MCC 1/2, 16 July 1840.

when the railway rates were known. This was no use for the Grand Junction canal company which, from the spring of 1839, had to compete with the London & Birmingham railway, fully prepared for goods traffic. The Grand Junction company, therefore, tried to force the pace and deflect traffic by means of preferential tolls away from those canal companies, especially the Coventry and Oxford companies, which would not agree to its own policy of adopting an average toll of one penny per ton per mile.

One result of this move was to aggravate the loss of traffic to railways already being felt by the Macclesfield, Peak Forest and Ashton canals. Two lengthy minutes in the records of the Peak Forest canal company are extremely informative of the condition of the canal trade and relations between the canal companies. Bouverie, manager of the Grand Junction, explained the purpose of his policy to delegates of the three northern canal companies, and agreed to extend the concession to either or both the Coventry and Oxford companies if the delegates could persuade them to co-operate. Although the Coventry company proved willing, the Oxford company was less than enthusiastic. A spokesman for the company felt no urgency or need to call a special board meeting to discuss the delegates' proposals. He suggested that the carriers were only playing the canal companies off against the railways for their own purposes and remained unaffected when informed that "Messrs Pickfords had already transferred a large portion of their trade (and that) Messrs. Bache & Co. were also on the railway and other parties threatening to leave us."⁸²

82 PFC 1/4, 30 Jan., 1839.

A further approach soon afterwards met with a similar response.

Perhaps the delegates were not too surprised at this reaction, for one thing their report made clear was the bad state of relations between the southern canal companies.

"To show the feeling which exists between the several canal companies in the south we may incidentally mention one member of a committee in allusion to the late meeting at Birmingham asked us somewhat roughly 'why the devil we had not joined them in Blackguarding Bouverie.' 83

In this atmosphere it is not surprising that a further conference, at Coventry in June 1840, was as ineffective as its predecessor. Delegates agreed to urge their companies to make further reductions, but as the Oxford company was not present at the meeting and is unlikely to have been sympathetic to the recommendation, little effect is likely to have resulted. Relations were particularly bad between the Oxford company and the Grand Junction company. The latter, pressed by railways from an early date, felt that the Oxford company was exploiting its position on the through-route, especially its temporary freedom from railway competition, by exacting unduly high charges and thereby inflating rates off its own section.⁸⁴ The Grand Junction saw the only salvation for canals in the lowest possible tolls, but, although it applied every type of pressure no real compromise was reached until 1846.⁸⁵ By then, the canal carriers' trade had virtually gone.

While the canal companies dithered, the carriers found they had to act, generally by adopting railroad transportation. In Pickfords' case the decision was precipitated by a failure on

83 Ibid.

84 MCC 1/2, 16 July 1840. A statement of tolls, according to distance and canal company, for the route between London and Manchester shows that in July 1840, the Oxford company was alone in charging 2½d per ton-mile. All other companies charged 1d or 1½d, except the Trent & Mersey and the Ashton canal companies which, on very short stretches of their routes - for a total of 7¾ miles in 236¼ miles - charged 2d.

85 Hadfield Canals of east Midlands pp 218-219.

the Grand Junction canal. Early in 1838 Pickfords put some of its van traffic on to the railway but continued satisfied with canals for its bulkier traffic. In any case the London & Birmingham railway could not then cope with much goods traffic. Later in the year the water level of the Grand Junction company's reservoir at Tring summit began to fall - the effect, ironically enough, of engineering works for the railway line - and threatened to disrupt seriously, even halt, the flow of traffic in and out of London.⁸⁶ In anticipation of such an eventuality Pickfords made a special arrangement with the London & Birmingham company to use the railway as far as Wolverton. Having by-passed the trouble spot it would there return to the canal. By September conditions at Tring were so bad that Pickfords began to use the railway. The fact that Pickfords returned to the canal at Wolverton indicated that the move was intended as a temporary expedient but it was apparently so successful that when the crisis passed Pickfords did not resume canal conveyance but instead began to adopt railway transportation on a permanent basis.

Pickfords got into a lot of trouble over this incident. Other carriers complained that Baxendale had abused his position with the London & Birmingham railway company - he was then Superintendent of the Outdoor Department - to gain an unfair advantage to Pickfords by shutting out its competitors. A little later, the Regents canal company, unhappy that Pickfords should use premises at City Basin for railway work, threatened an injunction to compel Pickfords to continue on the canals.

⁸⁶ GJC 1/6, 13 Jan., 7 April, 5 Aug., 30 Aug., 1838.

Baxendale replied that the public would be the arbiter between railway and canal and that, although he personally would welcome some accommodation between the new and old form of transportation, the company's attitude would only damage its own and Pickfords' interests.⁸⁷ In any case, Baxendale did not allow this threat to slow up his adoption of railways.

In January 1839 the Peak Forest canal reported the loss of some of Pickfords' traffic; by March it was down to half of its previous level.⁸⁸ From then on Pickfords steadily abandoned the canals. By 1841 Pickfords had virtually ceased using the Macclesfield⁸⁹ canal while in 1843, a significant move, Pickfords' head office was transferred from City Basin to the Castle Inn, Wood Street,⁹⁰ the firm's earliest premises in London. The decisive years were 1845-7, during which the Coventry, Oxford and Worcester & Birmingham companies were all notified by Pickfords of its intention to quit its canal premises.⁹¹ If one particular year were to be selected as critical, it would be 1846 when Pickfords' stock of canal horses dropped from 379 in the previous year to 231. It was then quickly run down to 32 by⁹² 1849.

87 Correspondence with London & Birmingham railway company and the Regents canal company about the construction of a 'lay-by' on the canal at Pickfords' wharf near the railway company's depot at Camden. January to April 1839 Pic. 3/21. This follows on from the agreement reached between Baxendale and the canal company RGC 1/36, 16, 30 Jan., 13, 27 Feb., 13, 27 March, 10, 24 April 1839; 1/38, 10 March 1841. See also Case and opinion of Counsel 1/1/1851, Pic. 3/20.

88 PFC 1/4, 30 Jan., 27 March 1839.

89 MCC 1/2, 17 Aug., 1841

90 Diary of J.H.Baxendale, 1843, Pic. HH.

91 In-Letter Book, CVC 8/7, 19 Dec., 1845, 12 June 1846; In-Letter Book, OXC 4/78, 20 June, 1846, OXC 4/79, 27 Sept. 1847; Board Minutes, WOBC 1/11, 8 Oct., 1847.

92 Statement of Horses, Pic. 4/25.

Pickfords' recorded tonnage payments to the Coventry canal company, Table 8:1, had already dropped off sharply before this date, but 1846 perhaps represented the point of no return.⁹³

In October 1847 Pickfords was reported to be determined "to abandon at Christmas next the canal as a means of transit for goods."⁹⁴ No doubt Pickfords would have preferred to run down its canal operations more slowly, but in the meantime important developments had taken place in the railway world. Several railway companies, the London & Birmingham and the Grand Junction among them, had come together to form the London & North Western Railway. From October 1846 Pickfords was negotiating an agency agreement with the new company. The successful conclusion of these negotiations marked the end of an important phase of Pickfords' history.

93 Clapham. Op.cit. p. 398 noted 1846 as the critical years for Acts by which railway companies sought to purchase or lease canal companies.

94 EWC 1/2 8 Oct. 1847, noting a report from the Grand Junction company.

TABLE 8:1 Pickfords' tonnage payments to the Coventry canal company

	<u>Jan-Feb.</u>	<u>Mar-Apr.</u>	<u>May-June</u>	<u>July-Aug.</u>	<u>Sept-Oct.</u>	<u>Nov-Dec.</u>
1833				642-16-11 (Aug-Sept.)		
1837						982.12.0d
1838		1343. 7.10.	794. 5.11.	789. 2.11.	847. 7. 1.	
1841		510. 9. 1.		396.15. 7.	395.17. 5.	450.18.8.
1842	418. 5.8.	463. 6. 2.	315. 10. 6.	440. 5.11.	343. 14. 6.	366. 5.3.
1843	368.12.10.	387.14. 9.	317. 1. 5.	330. 6.11.	426. 8. 0.	
1844						268.15.10.
1845	305.13. 5.	276.11. 2.	252. 2. 0.	206.18. 9.		189. 6. 5.
1846	175. 3. 7.	186. 9. 1.	154. 10. 4.	144.14. 8.	177. 9.11.	121.16.11.
1847	124. 9.11.	155.17. 8.	114. 12. 6.	118.19. 7.	117. 1. 8.	49. 7. 6.
1848	10.15. 2.	15.16. 4.	15. 19. 8.	12. 9. 6.	15. 6. 2.	

Source: Coventry canal company In-Letter Books,
1833-4, 183809, 1841-2, 1842, 1843, 1845-8,
(K-R) CVC 8/1-7.

CHAPTER 9.

THE COMING OF RAILWAYS.

Railways radically changed Pickfords' fundamental position as an independent carrier. The innovation of steam locomotives proceeded at a rapid rate, and road and canal conveyance were soon supplanted for long distance freight traffic. Consequently Pickfords had to reorganise. They were obliged to abandon canals and adopt railway transportation. Despite the cost of replacing obsolete capital, the transition was readily pursued.

Almost as quickly, a divergence of interests arose between the canal carriers and the new railway companies. The companies decided, some sooner than others, that efficient working and satisfactory returns to capital demanded direct control of all branches of the enterprise. For freight traffic, the railway company either became a public carrier itself or employed a private carrier in the subordinate role of agent. Contrary to the carriers' hopes, the coming of railways did not enhance their position; indeed in the long run it destroyed their role in the existing structure of the carrying trade. In the new pattern which emerged, the dominant place was held by the railway companies. Many canal carriers went out of business, but Pickfords survived, in the reduced role of agent to the railway companies.

In the early days, however, this outcome was not anticipated. Baxendale reacted positively to railways, regarding them as an opportunity to be turned to advantage rather than a threat to be resisted. He had probably been fore-warned of the future potential for railways and their implications for Pickfords. In 1825 William Cubitt visited Killingworth colliery on behalf of the committee of the Liverpool & Manchester railway company to

report on the working of George Stephenson's locomotives there. Baxendale possessed a copy of this report.¹ Cubitt was greatly impressed by what he saw and reported his conviction of the practicability of railways and steam-locomotives. In particular, Cubitt concluded that only in rare circumstances would railways fail to supersede canals - a prediction which Baxendale's later experience of railways confirmed.

Initially at least Pickfords regarded access to a railway line as a right, on payment of toll, as laid down in the early railway Acts, and not as a subject for negotiation with the railway company. In October 1829, some months before the line was opened, Pickfords informed the directors of the Liverpool & Manchester railway company of ^{its} "intention to conduct part of [its] business on the railway."² Use of the line, and to what extent, was regarded as being at the carrier's discretion. Pickfords did not claim unrestricted access; it proposed using its own waggons but there was no suggestion of using its own locomotives. Even so, Pickfords found it could not impose itself on the railway but had to seek terms, which the company, not the carrier, dictated. A few years later, when the Grand Junction railway was nearing completion, Baxendale showed he had learnt the lesson by making a personal approach to the company. Despite efforts to impress the directors with the scale and complexity of Pickfords' operations, and the firm's command of the traffic between London and Lancashire, he failed to convince them that

1 Report of William Cubitt, February 1825, to the chairman and committee of the Liverpool and Manchester railway company F.P. Baxendale told the S.C. on Railways, fifth report, PP 1844 (Vol. XI) Q.3362, that he had watched the development of railways since 1824.

2 LVM 1/1 Board Minutes 19 Oct. 1829.

he held the upper hand.³ Once again the railway company dictated conditions. Hard experience rendered the strict terms of the early railway Acts unenforceable. Baxendale discovered this sooner than others. In 1837, before there was much practical experience of railway working on any scale, Baxendale rejected as unworkable the claim of unrestricted access to railway lines to which others still clung.⁴

Pickfords sought to use railways at the earliest opportunity. Approaches to the Liverpool & Manchester and the Grand Junction railway companies well in advance of completion, were repeated in the case of the London & Birmingham railway. Contact was made with the Company towards the end of 1837, but Pickfords did not use the line until the following summer, and then only as a temporary expedient in the emergency created by the failure of water supplies at Tring Summit on the Grand Junction canal. Only in January 1839 was this arrangement made permanent. In September that year Pickfords had a daily service by rail between Leeds and York,⁵ and by 1840 was also using the Birmingham & Derby and the Midland Counties railways.⁶ Piecemeal additions continued - the Manchester & Leeds railway, followed, in 1843, by the South Eastern and South Western lines.⁷ The maps for 1839, 1841 and 1844⁸ mark clearly the geographical growth of

3 GJR 1/1 21 Sept. 1836.

4 S.C. on Railroad Communication PP., 1837-8 (Vol. XVI) Q.1112 Baxendale's evidence was given in December 1837; compare Mr. Wallace, M.P. for Greenock, who stated, in the debate on this report, that as far as the carriage of mail was concerned the government was at liberty to put its own engines on any line; any difficulties raised were "mere bugbear." Parliamentary Debates, Third Series Vol. 44, Column 447 ff.

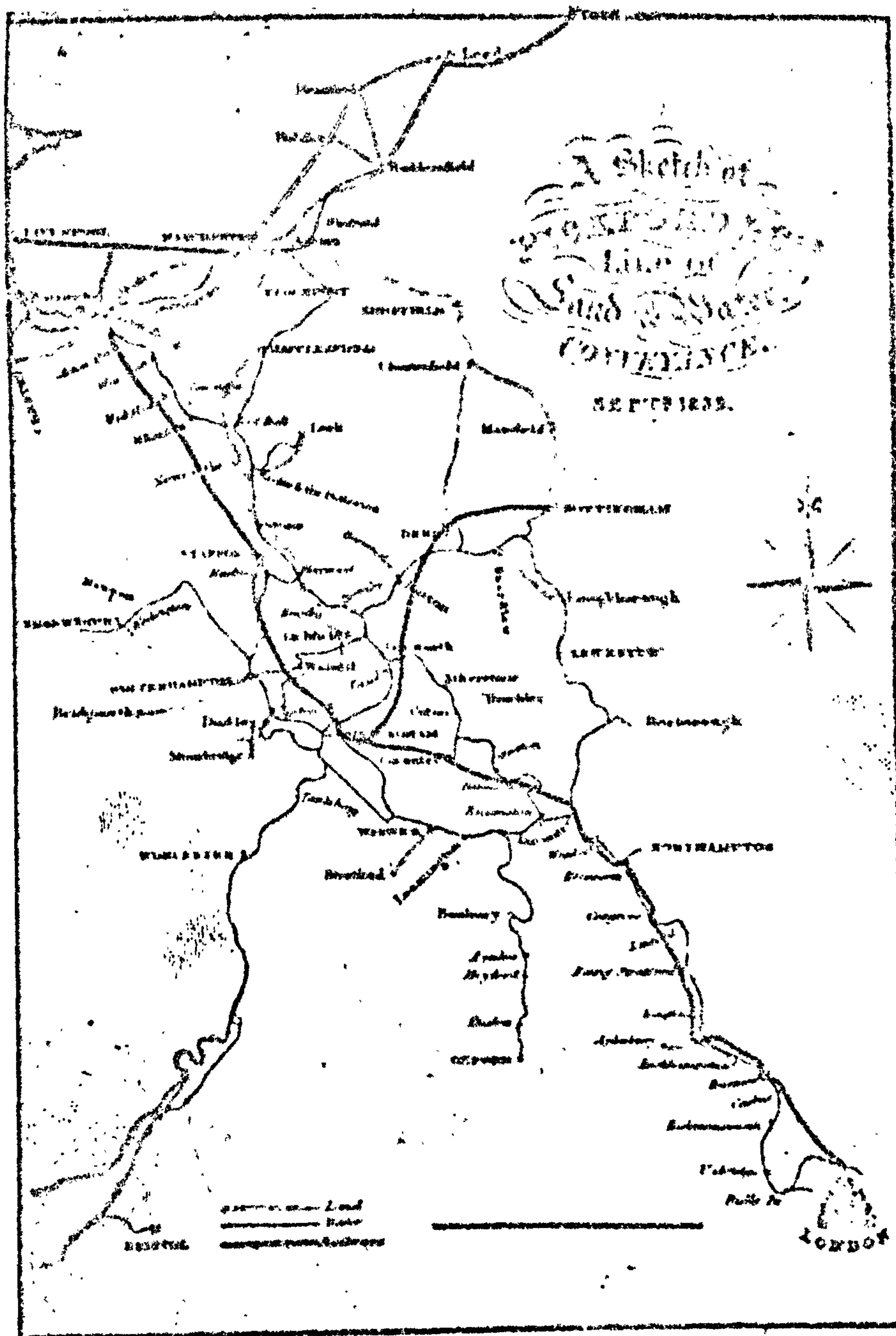
5 Advertisement Sept. 1839 Pic 4/3 p. 12.

6 Fifth report, S.C. on Railway Communication, PP. 1840 (Vol. XII) Q.432.

7 Railway Times 25 March 1843, p 361; and 3 June, p 623.

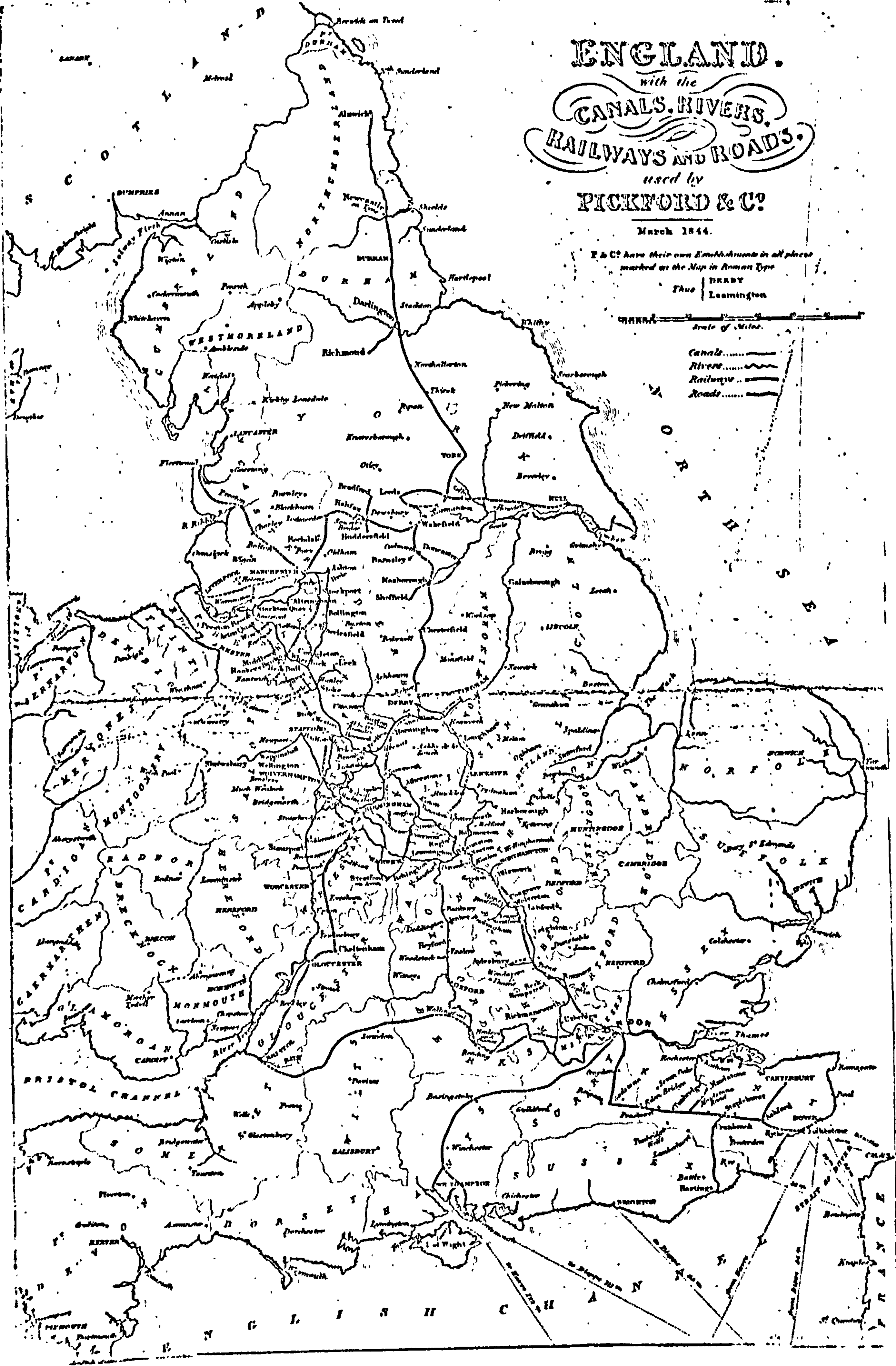
8 1839 - Pic 4/3; 1841 and 1844, CHP/28 and 29.

Pickfords' services by land, water and railway, September 1839



Source: Unknown Pic 4/3





Pickfords' railway services over the period. Furthermore, they demonstrate that Pickfords had made the important policy decision to follow the logic of railway building and extend its coverage according to the current or anticipated expansion of the railway network. The advent of railways initiated a new phase in Pickfords' development as a business concern; not just a new branch of business, but a new size and scale, with additional agencies yet further afield.

This policy took Pickfords into many parts of the country not previously served by the firm. Use of the South Eastern railway caused Pickfords to rent warehouses at Tonbridge, Staplehurst and Ashford.⁹ Road links to Maidstone, Canterbury and Hastings brought those towns into the orbit of rail services before branch lines were built to them. Depots were opened at Dover, Folkestone, Hythe and Cranbrook, and at several other places along the south coast. By contrast, Pickfords' use of the South Western and Great Western railways was limited and was not followed by comparable expansion. Pickfords' build-up in Kent was the first substantial penetration south of London, a step which also carried the firm across the Channel to Calais.¹⁰

Other areas of future development were also marked out, in the west and south-west of England, eastern England and south Wales.¹¹ In the north, Pickfords' interests extended into Scotland. In 1847 premises were taken in Glasgow and Edinburgh, a few months before the completion of rail links with England.¹²

9 SER 1/17 Board Minutes 4 July 1843.

10 See the map for 1844.

11 Ibid

12 Glasgow Post Office directory 1847-8, Appendix p 139.

With this step Pickfords became a truly national transport concern. By the end of the 1840s, although by then as railway agent rather than independent carrier,¹³ Pickfords' rail services covered most of Britain.

Pickfords' attitude to railways was clear and uncomplicated - a valuable innovation to be adopted as rapidly as possible. But, from the railway companies' point of view, the situation was not so simple. They had certain expectations from their lines which did not necessarily coincide with the carriers' interest. Indeed they often conflicted.

The railway companies had to decide whether, in order to acquire and organise their goods traffic, they needed to become public carriers or could rely on the established carrying firms. To employ the private carriers would save capital, a factor of some importance at the time, and would draw traffic, and thus revenue, to the company. In addition, railway companies faced many quite new management problems,¹⁴ and a policy which exploited relevant experience and expertise had much to recommend it. But there were several possible drawbacks. The carrier's profit would be a loss of revenue to the company, a cost to be set against capital savings. Secondly, the carrier, with substantial investment in road and canal transport, might be expected to minimize his capital commitment to railways, to bring only essential traffic to the line and thus depress the company's revenue below the optimum. Finally, exploitation apart, lack

13 Glasgow Post Office directory 1849-50, Appendix p. 149. According to this entry Pickfords were agent to the Caledonian, London & North Western, York, Newcastle & Berwick, York & North Midland, Midland and Bristol, and Birmingham railway companies, and carried on their own account on the Great Western, South Western, South Eastern, S.Devon, Eastern Counties and Brighton railways.

14 T.R.Gourvish, British railway management in the nineteenth century, with special reference to the career of Captain Mark Huish (1808-1867). (Unpublished London University Ph.D. thesis, 1967) p 19ff.

of direct control by the railway company opened the way to inefficient use of plant and equipment, a danger which would increase with each additional carrier employed.

Each railway company had to formulate a policy according to its judgement, on the basis of local circumstances, of the balance of advantage. Decisions varied widely. At one extreme both the Liverpool & Manchester and Grand Junction railway companies tended to follow a policy which reserved all traffic, including freight, exclusively to themselves. By contrast the London & Birmingham company left the organisation of its goods traffic to open competition between the carriers and restricted its role to the provision of waggons and locomotive power. In 1839, of the eight principal railway companies then in operation, the Liverpool & Manchester, Leeds & Selby, and Newcastle & Carlisle companies adopted an exclusive policy; the Bolton & Leigh company leased its traffic to a single carrier; the North Union claimed to follow the same open policy as the London & Birmingham company; the Stockton & Darlington company carried along with other parties. The Grand Junction company desired to be exclusive carriers and reserved all traffic between Birmingham and Liverpool to itself, but circumstances demanded that carriers be admitted for London traffic.¹⁵ Five years later, although most companies by then were carriers, exclusively or otherwise, such important companies as the Manchester & Leeds, North Midland and Midland Counties continued to follow an open policy.¹⁶ Decisions could be later reversed. The South Eastern

15 Second report, S.C. on Railways, PP. 1839 (Vol.X)

16 Appendix 2, p 22, fifth report S.C. on Railways pp. 1844 (Vol. XI)

railway company, for example, under Baxendale's guidance, initially pursued an open policy, but after his removal from the chairmanship, the company began to carry in its own right, although not to the exclusion of other carriers.¹⁷

The variety of policies pursued would suggest railway companies found the decision a difficult one.¹⁸ The directors of the Liverpool & Manchester railway, for example, considered this issue some eighteen months before opening,¹⁹ but a year passed before any decision was made. A particular problem was the company's obligation, contained in its Act of 1826, to convey all goods brought to its stations. In law the company was being required to function as a public carrier and so had to make appropriate arrangements. The directors considered the possibility of using existing carriers,²⁰ and sounded them out for terms, but finally decided that the company should proceed, "without the intervention of separate carriers, (as Pickford, Kenworthy, and others) but without excluding such carriers from the railway, should the directors be able to make satisfactory arrangements for their becoming carriers on the line."²¹ The necessary skills and experience were bought by attracting into the company's employment

17 Pickfords was closely associated with the South Eastern railway company but, after the change of policy, strongly denied that, through Baxendale, the firm had enjoyed a preferred position. SER 1/18, 25 Sept. 1844. For Pickfords' use of the line, SER 1/17 and 1/18 (1841-1845) passim; also Diary of Joseph Hornby Baxendale, entry for 1843, Pic HH.

18 Hardman Earle and Theodore Rathbone, both directors of the North Union (Rathbone was Deputy Chairman) and other railways held diametrically opposed views on this issue. Rathbone regarded the London & Birmingham railway as a 'sounder and better system.' Individual evidence, second report, SC on Railways, PP. 1839 (Vol.X)

19 Explicitly formulated as capital saving off-set against carriers' profit LVM 1/1 9 June 1828.

20 Ibid, 16 June 1828.

21 Ibid, 19 June 1829.

supervisory staff from the canal carriers.²² In practice the company remained cautious of the carriers and seems to have been unable to find satisfactory terms. Pickfords finally negotiated a special contract for its van traffic between Manchester and Liverpool,²³ but neither Pickfords nor any other carrier apparently operated independently over the line. General merchandise traffic between Liverpool and Manchester was reserved exclusively to the company.²⁴

The Grand Junction company, many of whose directors also sat on the Liverpool & Manchester board, sought independence in all aspects of its enterprise. When Baxendale met representatives of the board, he was explicitly told that the company intended to keep passengers and parcels traffic, locomotive power and waggons under its own control to prevent any possible dependence on the carriers. The company would also engage in the carrying trade on its own account should this appear necessary or desirable.²⁵ Even for the special category of van traffic, for which Pickfords sought similar arrangements to those already agreed with the Liverpool & Manchester company, the Grand Junction company was slow to commit itself. Baxendale met the directors in September 1836, the line was opened in July, 1837, yet not until March 1838 did the company agree to provide any waggons specially for Pickfords' use.²⁶ Prior to that Pickfords had had to take its

22 Ibid 6, 16 Nov., 21 Dec., 1829, 8 Feb., 1830. This became standard practice for other companies following similar policies, and Pickfords became a regular target for such raids. See my article 'A note on the supply of staff for the early railways' Transport History Vol. 1 1968. In addition to persons mentioned there, were Henry Wyatt of the London & Birmingham company, and Robert and William Moseley who joined the Eastern Counties railway. G.P. Neale Railway Reminiscences (1904) p 7.

23 LVM 1/2, 22 Nov., 1830

24 Evidence of Laurence and Booth (chairman and treasurer), first report, S.C. on Railways, PP. 1839 (Vol.X) QQ 789-794

25 GJR 1/1, 21 Sept., 1836;

26 GJR 1/2, 16, 21 March 1838.

chance on there being sufficient room available for its van goods on the company's scheduled passenger trains.

The Grand Junction company began by reserving to itself all general merchandise traffic. But a large share of such freight out of Liverpool was through-traffic to London, and the company failed to draw very much of this from the canal carriers. A contributory factor, no doubt, was the lack of a continuous rail link to London, which seriously weakened the company's competitive position. Until April 1839, when the railway became fully operational, most traffic passing between London and Birmingham, over half the total distance to Liverpool, had to go by canal,²⁷ which thus preserved the canal carriers' position in the trade. Substantial canal services continued to be necessary, while in addition trans-shipment costs between rail and canal at Birmingham would almost certainly have off-set any competitive pricing the railway company could offer. Even when the London & Birmingham line became available, the private carriers continued in a position of some strength. The Grand Junction company had no means of providing directly for traffic south of Birmingham, and, since the London & Birmingham company did not act as a carrier over its own line, an 'end-on' agreement for goods traffic between the two companies was precluded. Although the company tried to solve this problem by negotiating for an agent to act for it on the London & Birmingham line, no significant success was achieved before the spring of 1840.²⁸ In the meantime only

27 That is except for the quantities Pickfords and Bache were able to carry on London & Birmingham rails by special agreement.

28 The company tried two firms Robins & Co., and then John Jolly, a carrier between London and Birmingham, but neither was able to discharge the job efficiently. Success came when terms were agreed with Chaplin & Horne early in 1840. Chorley and Moss, fifth report S.C. on Railway Communication PP.1840 (Vol.XIII).

the private carriers could offer customers a service which ensured full responsibility for goods over the entire distance between London and Liverpool. The mode of conveyance was left to the carrier's discretion and, except for a limited range of traffic for which speed of transit was important, there was every reason, of cost and convenience, for the bulk of freight to go by canal. To a considerable extent, therefore, the carriers were able to dictate how much merchandise traffic went by Grand Junction rails and the company's exclusive policy was reason for them to keep it to a minimum.

In order to attract this traffic, the Grand Junction company found it necessary to modify its policy. Late in 1838 the company responded to prior promptings from Pickfords²⁹ and signed contracts whereby Pickfords and others became independent carriers on Grand Junction rails.³⁰ But it was essentially only a modification not an abandonment, of existing policy. The agreement applied only to through-traffic between the terminals at Liverpool and London: traffic between Liverpool and Birmingham continued to be the company's prerogative, and a request from Pickfords to be allowed to carry from stations along the line was rejected.³¹ The intention clearly was to bring traffic, and thus revenue, to the railway and not to provide the means for the private carriers to compete with the railway company over its own line. The

29 GJR 1/2, 17, 21 Nov. 1838.

30 Pickfords' contract was dated 17 Dec., 1838. It is reproduced at S.C. on Railway Communication PP. 1840 (Vol. XIII) Q.729. Similar agreements were made with Bache & Co. (GJR 1/2, 24 Nov., 1838), and, according to Chorley, treasurer of the Grand Junction, Q.3310, with Kenworthy & Co. The company's agreement with Robins & Co (reproduced Q.1973) did not commence until April 1839. Both the terms of the contracts and the relations between the company and carriers derives from evidence given to this committee.

31 GJR 1/2, 22 May 1839.

company insisted on an equal balance of traffic in each direction, and a minimum daily loading of 30 to 40 tons. The carriers could not charge less than the company's published rates and all special rates and discounts, the canal carriers' chief means of competing with each other, were prohibited. The carrier had to find his profit out of the 20% allowed off the monthly carriage account, after meeting his terminal costs, liability for damage and so on. The chief benefit to the carriers was that the agreement allowed for the trucks of the Grand Junction and London & Birmingham companies to pass onto each other's lines, so that goods could now be sent by rail undisturbed the whole distance between London and Lancashire. With the elimination of costly trans-shipment, the full benefits of railway transportation between the two points were enjoyed for the first time.

While modifying its policy, the Grand Junction company gave little away. It allowed the carriers to act independently but within strictly controlled limits. The carriers interpreted the move as a grudging concession, with the ulterior motive of discovering the source of their traffic, which the company would then seek for itself. In this situation, when each side saw the threat of exploitation in the other's moves, it is not surprising that mutual recriminations broke out. The Grand Junction company accused Pickfords of falsifying invoices, and was particularly angry at Pickfords' practice of bulking small parcels into larger bundles, to avoid paying per parcel, which the company regarded as totally dishonest if not technically illegal. Pickfords replied with charges of discrimination and poaching of traffic. The situation became more explosive when the company made a general reduction of rates, and then even

further depressed the value of the carriers' 20% allowance by deducting from it charges for the loading and unloading of waggons at Manchester by employees of the Liverpool & Manchester company, a task which the carriers had previously carried out themselves. The break came in autumn 1840. By then the Grand Junction company had negotiated terms with Chaplin & Horne for that firm to act as its agent in London and on London & Birmingham rails, and so was able to do without the carriers. Pickfords wanted to continue its use of Grand Junction rails after the termination of its contract with the company³² and asked for the same terms as those allowed to Chaplin & Horne. The company's refusal initiated a protracted legal wrangle.

Since so much of the firm's traffic passed between London and Lancashire, Pickfords' railway ambitions were materially affected by the Grand Junction company's decisions. Had the London & Birmingham company followed the same policy, Pickfords' hopes of an independent railway carrying service would have been frustrated. Because it took the opposite view, the company's rails provided the spring-board from which Pickfords was able to mount its incursion into railway carriage and bye-pass the restrictions thrown up by the Grand Junction company.

Although the London & Birmingham company did not change its working practice for goods traffic during its independent existence, the evidence suggests the company was not wholly sure of its open policy. First inclinations were to contract out

32 GJR 1/3, 30 Sept. 1840 and passim in subsequent months.

the carrying department. In November 1837 draft terms were discussed with Baxendale whereby Pickfords would organise the goods traffic, in the company's name, for a fee of 5% of the net profits. Pickfords would divert to the railway as much of its canal traffic as possible.³³ Such a policy would have been exclusive, to the selected agent, but without tight control being exercised by the company. Best advantage was seen to lie in the ready supply of technical skills, experienced management and an immediate flow of traffic which such a connection would bring to the line.

However, this policy was not implemented. A year later, despite a proposal that the company should be the exclusive carrier on its line and, implicitly, retain a special relationship with Pickfords,³⁴ the company had decided to leave its goods traffic to open competition between the carriers. Thus Pickfords' first use of the London & Birmingham line, in the emergency conditions on the Grand Junction canal in September 1838, was by way of a special and explicitly temporary arrangement.³⁵ Other carriers who applied for similar facilities were told that the company then lacked the resources to handle more than a small volume of goods traffic. Indeed Pickfords could only send limited quantities and had to provide its own staff and facilities. But the directors tempered their refusal with the promise that,

33 HL 2/19, R 316 Heads of agreement between London & Birmingham Company with Mr. Baxendale on behalf of Messrs. Pickford & Co. for undertaking the superintendence of the Goods Carrying Department 24 Nov., 1837. This agreement was recommended for approval by the Management Committee, minutes 6 Dec., 1837 LBM 1/85. The same minute also recommended an agreement with Chaplin & Horne for the conveyance of passengers, luggage and coach parcels, of which details are at HL 2/6 R34.

34 HL2/6 R48, Committee of Management, 12 Sept., 1838 'Plan to be proposed for carrying on the railway business.'

35 LBM 1/85 Minutes of Management Committee, 3 Sept., 1838.

once the appropriate arrangements were made, all the carriers would be placed on an equal footing.³⁶ It is not clear why the company dropped the favoured position originally intended for Pickfords.³⁷ Possibly the directors were already sensitive to the charge of undue preference to Pickfords which the disappointed carriers raised.³⁸ The company vigorously rejected this charge and insisted that the arrangements were purely temporary and that the company in no way wished to be a carrier.³⁹

Despite this, an element of uncertainty continued. At the annual general meeting of the London & Birmingham company, 1 February, 1839, shareholders were told that the line would be open to all carriers but the company would carry on its own account to ensure fair rates.⁴⁰ Such a policy had little to recommend it since, as the Grand Junction company found, the company would only with difficulty have avoided conflict

36 LBM 1/3 Board Minutes 5 Oct., 1838. This conformed to the position taken by the Committee of Administration, HL 2/6 R51; also LBM 1/85.

37 According to Baxendale the change was made on the company's initiative, apparently at a time when it was felt the company should itself carry - second report, S.C. on Railways PP 1839 (Vol.X) Q.2422.

38 Petition to Parliament presented by Lord Granville Somerset on behalf of warehousemen and carriers, Parliamentary Debates Third Series Vol. 46 Columns 1220-1221; also The Times 27 March 1839, page 5 Col. d. For early relations between Pickfords and the London & Birmingham railway company, see Baxendale's evidence S.C. on London & Birmingham Railway Bill PP 1839 (Vol. XIII), and S.C. on Railways, PP 1839 (Vol.X); also the early pages of D. Stevenson Fifty years on the London and North Western Railway (1891).

39 Evidence of George Carr Glyn and Richard Creed, chairman and secretary, S.C. on Railways, PP 1839 (Vol.X); the surviving company records support their statements. Pickfords also found it necessary to put out a circular, jointly with the London & Birmingham company, denying any attempted monopoly. HL 2/19, R62.A. Since the company's original Act did not contain a clause prohibiting 'undue preference' such a step would not have been illegal. As part of a subsequent Act the company came into line with what had become standard practice by inserting such a clause. Evidence Glyn and Creed, first report, S.C. on Railways PP 1839 (Vol.X) Q.93 ff.

40 RAC 1/226. I must thank my colleague Dr. M.C.Reed for this reference.

with its competitors. In the event the company did not engage in carrying when the line was fully opened. A year later, however, Baxendale asked the directors to dispel rumours that the company was considering whether to become carriers. As he was about to invest heavily in railway facilities he sought assurance that his capital expenditure would not be negatived by the company reversing its policy; "should the company contemplate becoming carriers it would be worse than folly for private individuals entering into competition."⁴¹ The continuing doubts suggest uncertainty on the company's part as to its best policy.

Presumably Baxendale received a satisfactory reply to his question, for he proceeded with his investment plans. Central to these was undoubtedly the establishment he had built at Camden Town as the focal point of Pickfords' railway operations. City Basin, Pickfords' canal headquarters, proved to be inadequate for rail traffic⁴² and had to be replaced. Baxendale believed that the London & Birmingham company's building plans seriously underestimated the probable growth of goods traffic,⁴³ and so decided to provide for his own needs. He bought a plot of land on the south bank of the Regents canal, adjacent to Camden Town goods station, and there built a large depot, a warehouse and administrative centre combined, the unique design of which, according to the needs of railway traffic, the scale, extensive facilities and speed of traffic through-put, drew

41 Baxendale to the chairman and directors of the London & Birmingham railway company, 5 Feb., 1840. Pic 4/27 P 14.

42 Hayward, one of Pickfords' senior clerks, Report of the Gauge Commissioners PP 1846 (Vol. XVI) Q.5858.

43 R.C. on Metropolitan Termini PP 1846 (Vol. XVII) Q.544

admiring comment.⁴⁴ The overall scheme incorporated a private dock and lay-by on the Regents canal,⁴⁵ potentially the means of integrating canal and rail traffic, together with a private bridge over the canal which gave access to London & Birmingham rails.⁴⁶ The capital cost was considerable, some £20,000 for the warehouse alone,⁴⁷ and in excess of £30,000 for the total project.⁴⁸ In the context of railway capital formation, this was a substantial sum for an individual private firm to lay out,⁴⁹ and Baxendale's caution before committing himself to investment on this scale was wholly reasonable.

The Camden depot was to be the hub of a country-wide railway carrying network. Pickfords' ability to build up a railway carrying trade comparable to that on the canals, in

- 44 Penny Magazine 8, 22 Oct., 1842 pp 394-5, 411-2; Railway Times 4 Dec. 1841 p 1264 reported the depot's opening; S. Salt Railway and commercial information p 18, quoting Quarterly Review Dec 1848. In the contemporary manner, comment was made on the number of cranes and quantity of steam-power deployed, the number of bricks consumed in the building, and the special facilities for men and horses.
- 45 Intended partly to pacify the Regents canal company who threatened a court action to compel Pickfords to continue using the canal as long as it held the lease of City Basin. RGC 1/36 16, 30 Jan, 13, 27 Feb., 13, 27 March, 10, 24 April, 1839; 1/39, 10 March 1841; 1/40, 26 June 1844, 6 Nov., 1846, 17 Feb. 1847. Also Pic 3/21 correspondence between Baxendale and Regents canal company. Jan to April 1839.
- 46 LBM 1/4 22 Nov 1839, 18 Dec. 1840, 8 Oct. 1841. Later additional rails and a turn table were put down, (LBM 1/5 12 July 1844) and then a sidings for Pickfords adjoining the company's depot (LBM 1/6, 13 March 1846).
- 47 Railway Times 1841, p 1244 estimated the cost at £20,000, Hayward put it at £25,000. Report of the Gauge Commissioners PP 1846 (Vol. XVI) Q.5858.
- 48 In 1846, Baxendale said he had spent £30 -40,000 on Camden R.C. on Metropolitan Termini pp 1846 (XVII) Q.545. In Sept. 1847 the premises were sold to the London & North Western railway company for £31,420.19.4d Duplicate conveyance Pic 3/2. This compares with the £20,000 spent on City Basin in 1820.
- 49 It is difficult to relate this figure to contemporary spending by railway companies since data for comparable building is not available. J.R.Kellett The impact of railways on Victorian cities (1969), gives the cost of Lime Street Station, Liverpool, in 1832 as £135,000, and £150,000 for Central Station, Manchester in 1860.

particular the ability to manipulate the flow of traffic according to its own interests, ultimately rested on the open policy pursued by the London & Birmingham railway company. As carriers primarily between London and Lancashire, it was the one line Pickfords had to use. Fortunately Pickfords enjoyed good relations with the Company, whose line gave access to the Midland and Yorkshire railways, and thus a route to Manchester and Liverpool which avoided the Grand Junction railway. Pickfords' position as a national railway carrier was, therefore, tenable so long as the London & Birmingham company found no cause to modify its policy. Pickfords was the biggest single user of the London & Birmingham line.⁵⁰ In 1846 traffic was passing through the Camden depot at the rate of 1600 tons per week,⁵¹ or 85,000 tons per annum, possibly a tenth of the total freight on the line,⁵² and Pickfords paid the company some £60,000 in respect of it.⁵³

The choice of Camden for Pickfords' railway headquarters emphasised the firm's continuing primary concern, from its canal trade, with traffic between London and the North. Very little merchandise was carried on to the lines to the west and south of London.⁵⁴ In the organisation of traffic, too,

50 Followed by Chaplin & Horne. Mills, manager of the London & Birmingham goods department at Camden Report of Guage Commissioners PP 1846 (XVI) Q.1954 ff; Carr Glyn, Ibid Q.1460.

51 Hayward R.C. on Metropolitan Termini PP 1846 (XVII) QQ 1351-5. Chaplin & Horne carried 1200-1500 tons per week. Horne, Ibid Q.475.

52 Hayward Ibid Q.1363, QQ.1377-80. By 1848 Pickfords was handling over 840 tons per day through Camden. Salt, Railway and commercial information p 18.

53 Baxendale Ibid Q.546.

54 Because, in Baxendale's words, these areas "have no manufactures" Ibid QQ.582-3.

railways reinforced prior trends rather than introduced any fundamental changes. As more railways opened, multilateral flows of traffic, which Pickfords had been developing in its canal boat schedules, gained greater prominence, helped on from 1842 by the work of Railway Clearing House.⁵⁵ Traffic to Bristol and the west of England, for example, which had previously been channelled through London was increasingly sent direct.⁵⁶ Benefits accrued on all sides as the dangers and costs of repeated trans-shipment were eliminated. But in the mid-1840s most of this lay in the future. Trade still retained the stamp of the eighteenth century economy in that the bulk of traffic still flowed to and from London, and the greater part of it was directed to and redistributed by London warehousemen.⁵⁷

Railways created some new types of traffic but by and large the same mixed pattern of the canal traffic was repeated. Pickfords carried by rail a wide variety of goods from large boilers and railway turn-tables to raspberries and elephants' teeth. There was, however, a broad distinction in the composition of traffic in and out of London. Pickfords brought chiefly manufactured goods up to London and took down commodities like groceries and draperies in exchange.⁵⁸ On occasion the same items might be moved up and down within the space of two or three months. For example, sugar imported at Liverpool and sent to London for sale might be returned to Liverpool if market conditions there became more favourable.⁵⁹ Switching commodities

55 P.S.Bagwell The Railway Clearing House in the British economy 1842-1922, (1968).

56 Hayward, Report of Gauge Commissioners PP 1846 (XVI) Q.5838.

57 Ibid. Q.5837

58 Hayward R.C. on Metropolitan Termini PP 1846 (XVII) QQ.1356-9.

59 Ibid QQ.1361-2.

between markets like this was not new. Although railways added greater flexibility they had clearly not yet smoothed out regional variations in price structures.

Goods handling procedures at Camden depended on the direction of traffic.⁶⁰ 'Up' traffic, coming in by day but chiefly by night, had to be unloaded from the trucks, sorted according to the London delivery districts and re-loaded on to road waggons ready for immediate distribution. 'Down' traffic came in over-night from the London warehouses and had to be sorted and loaded according to the town of consignment, ready for the first goods train at 6.00 a.m. The direction of traffic thus demanded its own range of knowledge and procedures. The Camden depot was designed to meet these separate needs, and so was divided into two independently operating units each with its own staff of porters and clerks. The rhythm of work also differed, according to the time-table of goods trains set down by the London & Birmingham company, but as round-the-clock working was called for in both parts of the depot, a double relay of staff was necessary.

In despatching goods from Camden the overriding principle, as before on the canals, was, whenever possible, to trunk traffic direct to its place of destination.⁶¹ Some trans-shipment was found to be necessary, for example, between canal and railway at Camden, Rugby and Birmingham. The objective was to send whole truck loads to each town to which the firm carried by rail.

60 This paragraph is based on Penny Magazine 8, 22 Oct., 1842 pp 394-5, 411-2.

61 The following is based on the evidence of Bass and Hayward to the Gauge Commissioners, esp. QQ.5819-20.

When these conditions were absent Pickfords preferred for the sake of a regular service and alternative cost, to send the minimum truck loading of 30 cwts which the company would allow and pay for $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons, the minimum charge, if this would get goods to their destination undisturbed. The smaller pay-load of standard gauge trucks gave much greater flexibility to the carriers in this respect, and were also more economical of storage and loading space at stations where accommodation was cramped.⁶² Incomplete loads were put together and sent to Derby⁶³ where Pickfords absorbed traffic from the west of England. Full loads could be guaranteed from Derby northwards. Although the focal points were different the basic principles and structure of Pickfords' traffic flow remained much the same as in canal days.

The 'open' system of goods working was clearly preferable to Pickfords, since it allowed the carrier to regulate his own traffic. But considerable technical and economic inefficiency was built into this system. Thirty-hundred weight loadings in $3\frac{1}{2}$ ton trucks wasted waggon space and locomotive power, a cost which, together with the reduplication of terminal facilities, was multiplied in proportion to the number of carriers on the line. Disputes between carrier and railway company increased the waste. To maintain opposition to the Grand Junction company, Pickfords

62 Hence the reason why officials of Pickfords gave evidence in favour of the standard gauge. Pickfords had to deal with the break of gauge at Gloucester for Bristol and west of England traffic. Also S.C. on Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton and Oxford & Rugby railway bill. PP 1845 (Vol. XI), evidence of Bass QQ.3286-3433, Stephens QQ.4647-4697, Hayward QQ.5102-5146.

63 Thus avoiding the Grand Junction railway, with which Pickfords was still in dispute when Hayward gave evidence (Nov. 1845).

diverted traffic by way of the Midlands railways and the Manchester & Leeds railway. Pickfords quoted competitive rates and held traffic off the Grand Junction line,⁶⁴ but railway resources were being wastefully used. The Grand Junction company's policy was technically and probably economically more efficient, as it would benefit from economies of scale. Adequate data by which to test the alternatives does not exist, and efforts to show the greater economic efficiency of the 'closed' system ~~per se~~ are not convincing.⁶⁵ The Grand Junction company was satisfied that its system brought best returns and it is significant that, even before the amalgamation which formed the London & North Western railway company, in July 1846, the London & Birmingham company was reconsidering its own position on the carrying question.⁶⁶ However the reversal of policy on the London & Birmingham section of the amalgamated line was for the sake of uniformity of practice rather than a studied consideration of the relative merits of the case.⁶⁷ The optimum economic relationship between railway companies and private carriers remains difficult to assess. Even though the 'open' system involved an element of waste, it might still be justified for social reasons. The carriers, for example, argued that their

64 See various letters to the Editor Railway Times 1841, p 705 , p 1078, p 1101.

65 B.Poole, Twenty short reasons for railway companies becoming themselves the carriers of goods. (Liverpool 1844) Manuscript version Pic 4/25 Poole's analysis takes no account, for example, of differences of traffic or terrain.

66 Evidence of Glyn and Creed, second report, S.C. on Railway Acts Enactments PP 1846 (Vol. XIV). The directors felt reductions were not being passed on to the public. Although this evidence was given in 1845 it is impossible to say how far it reflected the company's independent experience and how far it owed something to the forthcoming amalgamation. Joint Board meetings were held with the expanded Grand Junction company, in anticipation of parliamentary approval, from December 1845. I owe this information to my colleague Dr. T.R.Gourvish.

67 Huish, general manager, confidential report to the chairman and directors of the LNWR on the working of the merchandise traffic for the half year ending 31 Dec., 1847. HL 2/19 R 99B; Gourvish British railway management p 174.

continued existence was desirable in the public interest since they alone countered the threat of a railway monopoly.

Relations between railway companies and carriers attracted considerable contemporary discussion, yet a similar problem of equal public interest received little or no attention. This was the optimum relationship between railways and canals, in the sense of an integrated national transport system. In the light of the road versus rail debate of the present century, it is striking that no rationalisation of function between canal and railway was attempted. Why?

Cumulative canal investment was estimated at some £18m. in 1842,⁶⁸ equal to about 4% of National Income,⁶⁹ compared to £62.45m. then invested in railways.⁷⁰ Additional was the value of carriers' trading capital, which was certainly considerable but could only be guessed at. The resources so allocated were sufficiently large for it to be socially and economically undesirable for them to be unnecessarily dissipated. Any controlling measures would have had to come from Parliament but there was little sign that the question was at all appreciated. James Morrison argued that Parliament should prevent "the unnecessary waste of public capital" but he had in mind reduplication of routes by canals or railways rather than the control of

68 Salt Statistics and calculations, p 38. Mather After the Canal Duke pp 70-71 has a figure of £20m for 1829; similarly Habakkuk & Deane in W.W.Rostow (ed) The economics of Take-off into sustained growth. (International Economics Association, 1963) p 73 estimate the cumulative capital investment in canals 1760-1835 at about £20m.

69 P.Dean & W.A.Cole, British economic growth 1688-1959 (1964) Table 37 p 166 figure for 1841.

70 G.R.Hawke & M.C.Reed, 'Railway capital in the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century' Economic History Review Second Series, Vol. XXII, (1969) Table 1, pp 270-1.

competition between canal and railway.⁷¹ Poulett Thomson also suggested that railway applications should be considered, amongst other criteria, by the sufficiency of existing means of conveyance, but this was scarcely to be a strict system of regulation.⁷²

Railways were not necessarily destructive of canals,⁷³ the basis of a compromise existed. Although the objective of breaking an alleged canal monopoly lay behind the promotion of the Liverpool & Manchester railway,⁷⁴ railway investment was not necessarily antagonistic to the canals. John Moss, for example, went out of his way to gain the support of the Staffords' canal interests in the first promotional stages of the Grand Junction railway. To forestall canal opposition, Moss approached James Loch in the hope of involving interested canal companies in the project. But Loch was unable to get any response and so Moss had to proceed without the hoped-for co-operation. He quickly found that this was no hindrance and that potential canal opposition could be discounted.⁷⁵ To a considerable extent, it would seem, the canals' fate was a product of the canal companies' inertia.

71 Parliament Debates, Third Series Vol. 33 1836 Cols.980-1.

72 Ibid Vol. 31 Debate on the Committee on Railways, 1 March 1836.

73 See Mather's discussion of Clapham's assertion to the contrary After the Canal Duke Chap VII esp. p 121, 133, and p 147.

74 This was Huskisson's stated reason for supporting the Liverpool & Manchester railway bill, Parliamentary Debates New Series, Vol. 15 (1826) Col. 29. However collusion between the Bridgewater and the Mersey & Irwell companies has been rejected by Hadfield & Biddle Canals of north west England Chaps 5 p 107 ff. and Mather Op.cit. chap 1 p 14 ff.

75 M.C.Reed 'The origins of the Grand Junction railway 1829-1833' Transport History Vol. 3 1970; Mather Op.cit. p 65 ff.

Parliament seems to have lacked both the will and the means of formulating a national transport policy. The failure to harmonise canals and railways can be set against the equal failure to ensure a uniform gauge for the whole railway system. During the critical formative years of the early 1830s railways were regarded as chiefly local matters, to be left to the parties concerned. The view that all railways were of national concern and required an element of central direction was apparently held only by a minority. No action followed Sir Harry ^eVarney's call, in 1836, for the establishment of a Railway Commission to perform this task.⁷⁶ Some years earlier Robert Peel had temporarily inclined to James Loch's proposal for a Government Board to supervise all transport undertakings.⁷⁷ The essential principle of Loch's scheme was implemented with the creation of a Railway Board under Lord Dalhousie in 1844, but the Board was disliked as an extra-parliamentary body and its rationale was destroyed when Peel headed a vote against the Board's report in favour of the Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway Bill.⁷⁸

Parliament's failure to devise any direct form of control meant that railways were regulated by the private bill committee procedure of the House of Commons. The unreformed committee system was, from a national point of view, an inadequate way

76 Parliamentary Debates, Third Series, Vol. 31, 1836, Cols. 1113-4; also see The Times 8 Aug, 1836 p 7 Col. b., proposals for control of railway building.

77 Reed Op.cit. p 9.

78 H. Parris, 'Railway Policy in Peel's administration 1841-1846' Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, Vol. 33, 1960.

of assessing a projected railway. Applications were considered in isolation from comparable bills; committee members could vote without being present during the taking of evidence, and in particular "the private Bill Committee thought of itself as an umpire in a contest between two private parties, not as the guardian of the public interest."⁷⁹ Central control of railways by Parliament was thus not a live issue during this period. Parliament might intervene to ensure fair competition but not positively to shape the economic structure.⁸⁰

Competition between the private carriers and railway companies for goods traffic was a matter for Parliament's concern and was taken up by successive select committees. The 'carrying question' became the centre of lively debate in committee, press and pamphlet.⁸¹ Practical experience soon extinguished the belief that railways could be regarded as a form of public highway. The need for a company to have total control of its line was accepted and also the railways' de facto monopoly of passenger traffic. Difficulty arose over goods traffic, due to the failure of canals to retain more than low value goods. The danger of a railway monopoly of all transport forms was raised, a potential threat to the public interest.⁸² The private carriers warned that monopolists could fix their rates at will and that only their continued existence ensured fair rates to the public. To defend what it saw as its legal rights

79 H. Parris Government and the railways in nineteenth century Britain (1965) p 21.

80 There was some sort of precedent, however, in the calls for a unified system of roads under central control, mentioned by Pratt History of transport p 81 ff. Pratt quotes the report of the S.C. on the highways of the kingdom (1819), W.K. Delany The general turnpike acts (1823), Westminster Review Oct. 1825.

81 For further details and references, see Jackman Transportation in modern England appendix 14, and my article 'Railway revolution,' Transport History, Vol. II 1969. The following paragraph summarise the essence of the controversy.

82 James Loch shared this opinion. Mather Op.cit. pp 104-5

Pickfords fought an extended legal battle with the Grand Junction railway company through the early 1840s in an attempt to salvage at law a position which in terms of day to day business was becoming increasingly untenable.

The dispute between the two parties was in part purely legal - whether or not the Grand Junction company's Act empowered it to carry goods off its own line and to engage in collection and delivery services. Baxendale sought to restrict the company to carrying on its own line in the belief that wider power would preclude any effective competition. Freedom of competition was, for Baxendale, the pre-condition of commercial prosperity and anything which inhibited it could only be damaging to the country.⁸³ The railway company, reasonably enough, sought the widest interpretation of its Act. The particular matters over which the court action was raised - Pickfords' claim to send small parcels packed in hampers at a tonnage rate instead of paying per parcel, and for a rebate equal to that allowed to Chaplin & Horne for collection and delivery in London - although substantial, were in many ways essentially the external manifestation of a more basic issue. Behind the claims, counter-claims and special pleadings lay Pickfords' desperate struggle for survival and the railway company's determination to be master in its own house.

To buttress its position each side claimed the defence of public interests in that it offered a cheaper and more efficient service than the other. The arguments of both sides had an element of persuasiveness, without being easily demonstrable

83 S.C. on Railways PP 1844 (Vol. XI) Q.3191.

in cost terms. Probably Pickfords' weightiest point was that the private carrier could offer a country-wide service and accepted full liability for goods in his charge. By contrast the railway companies were limited in coverage, jealously independent of each other and unwilling to accept liability for goods once off their line. For each railway company to attempt to match the carriers' services would occasion undescribable chaos and wasteful and expensive reduplication. This contention was in part falsely based since it presumed, somewhat ingenuously, that individual companies could not carry beyond the limits of their own lines or even devise some pooling system by which to share traffic, receipts and responsibility.⁸⁴ In part, however, it was substantiated by the practical difficulties experienced in negotiating pooling agreements, as exemplified by the early history of the Railway Clearing House.⁸⁵

The issues were complex and the official attitude, as expressed in the reports of successive select committees, was only slowly formulated. Eventually it became clear that only by banning railway companies from carrying goods at all, even over their own lines, could effective protection be assured for the carriers. This was a radical step, and one which Parliament proved unwilling to take.

The fullest consideration of the carrying question, dominated by the controversy between Pickfords and the Grand Junction company, was given by the Seymour committee of 1840.⁸⁶

84 Baxendale's evidence, second report S.C. on Railways PP 1839 (Vol. X) Q.2506 ff.

85 Bagwell Railway Clearing House, Chap. IV

86 S.C. on Railway Communication PP. 1840 (Vol. XIII). The committee issued five reports, the last of which followed extensive evidence from representatives of Pickfords and the Grand Junction company. The committee of the previous year declined to pass any opinion on the grounds that there was inadequate experience available: Second report S.C. on Railways PP.1839 (Vol.X).

In its third report the committee hedged. It apparently favoured the system whereby as on the Liverpool & Manchester line, the railway company was a carrier of goods but subject to maximum charges. The committee's only recommendation was for the appointment of an authority to examine the various systems in use. In its fifth and final report, however, the committee had seemingly been swayed by the carriers' claim that only they accepted full liability for goods in transit. The committee conceded that a railway company could carry more cheaply over its own line but argued that, as far as through-traffic was concerned, the carriers' profit would be a smaller cost to the public than the confusion and disputed claims which would follow if the railway companies engaged in such traffic. Even so, no legislative intervention was advised.

By 1844, when the question was again discussed, opinion was less favourable to the carriers.⁸⁷ They had proposed that a schedule of clauses,⁸⁸ designed to ensure them conditions of fair competition with the railway companies, should be attached to all railway Acts but the committee regarded them as a major interference in a company's management and refused to endorse them, in the absence of exceptional and compelling reasons. Instead the committee expressed the hope that the decision of the Court of Chancery in the case of *Pickford v Grand Junction*

87 Fifth report section IV part 2, S.C. on Railways PP.1844 (Vol. XI)

88 Reproduced as Appendix 5. Baxendale's case, which he also argued before the 1841 committee, was that railways, as public companies, possessed such large resources and strong monopoly powers as to be beyond the normal competitive power of market forces. Only by legislative intervention would competition from private sources be possible. See also Memorial of Pickford & Co. to the Board of Trade (Feb.1844) Pic 4/25. p 15.

company would provide further guidance. Parliament effectively refused to take any decision on the matter.

The general question of relations between the carriers and the railway companies continued for several years but the particular dispute between Pickfords and the Grand Junction company was brought to an issue by events quite removed from the immediate controversy. In 1845 the Liverpool & Manchester railway company was merged into an enlarged Grand Junction company which then joined with the London⁺ Birmingham and Manchester & Birmingham companies to form the London & North Western railway company. The Act passed in July 1846, and by October negotiations were already underway for Pickfords and Chaplin & Horne to become agents to the new company.⁸⁹ The reversal of the London & Birmingham company's open policy rendered Pickfords' dispute with the Grand Junction company quite meaningless.

The change of policy was the most important single factor which destroyed Pickfords' position but there were other considerations pressing both sides to seek a solution. Legal costs were heavy and Pickfords' vigorous opposition to the Grand Junction company could not have been pursued indefinitely in the face of its failure to secure results from court or Parliament. For its part, too, the Grand Junction company had reason to resolve the dispute. By the mid-1840s capital charges were bearing heavily on railway companies. Track maintenance costs were unexpectedly high and running expenses, including the introduction of more powerful locomotives, mounted

89 LNW 1/221 Minutes general locomotive and general merchandise committee 14 Oct. 1846.

with increased scale of operations.⁹⁰ Large capital sums were also tied up in terminal buildings and costly urban entry schemes.⁹¹ The need to maximise revenue forced companies to seek all possible traffic, not just the passenger⁹² and high paying merchandise trade. An attack was made on the remaining canal traffic when it was appreciated that large quantities of low value traffic could be profitable.⁹³ The Grand Junction company experienced all of these pressures and in addition was subject to strong competition on all sides.⁹⁴ with more threatened by the new surge of railway promotions. In this context Pickfords had much to offer the new amalgamated company - experience, substantial capital savings and above all traffic. The basis of a compromise was present, if at some cost to each side. Pickfords lost much of its independence; the railway company had to seek harmonious working with its recent opponent. It was an alliance born of necessity and was never an easy one. In January, 1847, an agency contract was agreed⁹⁵ with effect from 1 July and in September the same year Baxendale sold his depot at Camden, to the London & North Western railway company.⁹⁶

90 Gourvish British railway management p 21.

91 Kellett, Impact of railways on Victorian cities pp 9 - 14, pp 79-86. In 1867 it was estimated that approximately 20% of the LNWR's capital had been spent in this way, most of it before 1849.

92 Until the requirement of 'Parliamentary trains', 1844, this was heavily oriented to the first class traffic.

93 Huish's evidence, S.C. on railways. PP 1844 (Vol.XI) Q.6638 ff; also Huish's report on merchandise traffic to LNWR directors Feb 1848, HL 2/19 R 99B. But also see G.R. Hawke Railways and economic growth in England and Wales 1840-1870. (Oxford 1970) Chap III, p 55 ff.

94 Gourvish Op.cit. chaps 3 and 4.

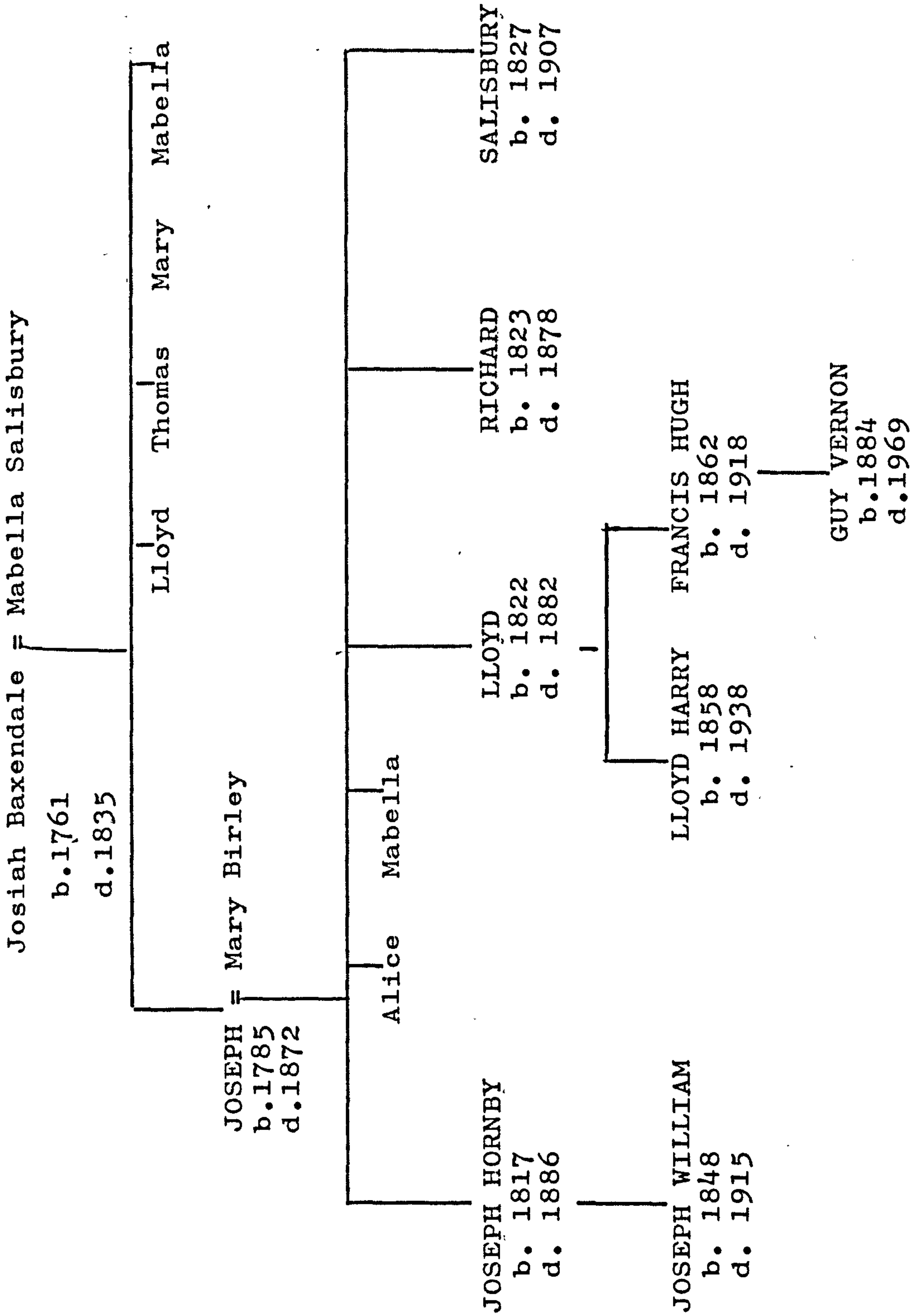
95 LNW 3/3. It is significant that the contract was signed not by Baxendale but by his sons.

96 Duplicate conveyance Pic 3/2.

CHAPTER 10.

SUBORDINATION TO RAILWAYS 1847-1901.

Baxendale Family Pedigree



From 1847 Pickfords became increasingly identified with railway business in general and with the London & North Western railway company, (LNWR) in particular. The agency agreement commenced in that year continued, with periodic renewals, until 1901. The increased traffic and revenue it brought to Pickfords became a central prop of the firm's business. At first the agency was technically conducted as a separate enterprise by Baxendale's three sons, although in practice the agency traffic was worked in with Pickfords' general traffic.¹ Baxendale himself was not a signatory to the agreement but his unwillingness to become formally involved did not lead him to stand in his sons' way. In the light of his experiences during the preceding few years, his ejection from the chairmanship of the South Eastern company in 1844 and his frustrating legal battle with the Grand Junction railway company, his attitude is not difficult to understand. By the later 1840s, Baxendale was clearly quite disenchanted of railway affairs.²

Although defeated, outside the courts, on the main issue, Baxendale did not concede the field. He was a formidable litigant and fought stubbornly for his rights as he saw them. More than one company must have rued the day when Baxendale filed a suit against it, for he had the habit of winning his cases. A note in Pickfords' records relates that between 1 January 1858 and 25 May 1863 thirty-four actions were brought against railway companies. Of these, two were then still proceeding; only one had been lost, and that on a technicality.³

1 Case and Opinion of Counsel as to the legality of Pickfords' using City Basin for Agency work, 1/1/1851. Pic 3/20.

2 Thus the tenor of his evidence to the Gauge Commissioners and the R.C. on Metropolitan Termini.

3 Even in this case, (v Eastern Counties railway company), the note adds, the company, on the Court's intimation, conceded for the future the substance of Pickfords' claim. In sixteen of these cases, the Great Western railway company was the defendant.

Some of these actions marked important stages in the definition of railway law. The judgments in the Reading case and the Bristol case,⁴ both in 1858, established the law concerning undue preference shown to itself by a railway company. Hadley v Baxendale (1854)⁵ remains the precedent for remoteness of contingency in the law of contract.

The future, however, undoubtedly lay with the railways, and for Pickfords close association with the LNWR. Within weeks of the amalgamation being formally approved Huish, the general manager of the new company, was reporting on negotiations then in hand for Pickfords and Chaplin & Horne to become cartage and carrying agents of the company. By January 1847 sufficient common ground had been established for the terms of a draft contract to be discussed and in May, all details finalised, the contract was sealed.⁶ It was estimated that, on the basis of existing traffic alone, the company would gain a revenue of £30,000 per annum as a result of the agreement. An even larger income would accrue from the increased traffic expected.⁷

The agents' duties comprised services both on and off the railway. For performing cartage and delivery services at the railway company's stations, up to a distance of seven miles, the agents were paid a tonnage allowance according to an agreed schedule. As this part of the contract was not meant to be a source of profit to the agents, the allowance was reduced :

4 Both of these were Great Western cases. Undue preference appears as the most common cause of litigation. For the details of the two cases, Collection of the cases decided under the second section of the Railway and Canal Traffic Act of 1854 and Register of cases decided by the Railway Commissioners under the Regulation of Railways Act, 1873 (ed. Neville & MacNamara, 1874) p 191, p 202. also Railway Times 13 Nov. 1858 p 1355, 22 Jan. 1859 p 80.

5 E.B.Ivatts Carriers' Law p 274

6 Minutes: General Locomotive and General Merchandise Committee LNW 1/221: 14 Oct., 9, 14 Nov., 1846; 8 Jan, 5 March, 9 April, 14 May 1847. Contract, LNW 3/3.

7 LNW 1/221, 9 Nov., 1846.

as costs, especially that of fodder, fell. In return for carrying out the company's duties as carrier, exclusive of actual conveyance, the agents were paid on a commission basis, according to the total tonnage carried. The same basic format was adopted by the Midland railway company, for which Pickfords and Chaplin & Horne were also joint agents. The LNWR, however, took the further step of guaranteeing a minimum income to its agents. The company contracted to make up any deficiency below £7500 p.a., but was to receive half of any excess over £12,500. The agents' joint salary was distributed in the ratio of 64:36 in favour of Pickfords, recognition of the firm's position as the larger carrier. However, when the contract was renewed in 1852, there were significant changes.⁸ The guarantee was raised to £10,000 but the company took two thirds of the commission up to £11,000 and everything beyond that. The allocation of commission between the agents was also altered. Pickfords had failed to provide the volume of traffic proportionate to its share of commission and so, reluctantly, it had to concede improved terms, 60:40, in favour of Chaplin & Horne.

Memories of former battles were revived by the LNWR's stipulation that small parcels were to be forwarded and charged separately, "it being hereby admitted that it is part of this entire contract of agency that payment accordingly shall be made." The Midland Company made the same condition. Both companies required their agents not to compete with them by any alternative form of transportation, but to bring all their present traffic to the railway. The remnants of Pickfords' canal trade was the target here.

⁸ Pic.3/3.

Despite the speed with which Pickfords and others abandoned the canals, the LNWR remained especially sensitive to the threat of canal competition. With hindsight this seems rather surprising, bearing in mind the ease with which it was possible to disrupt whole sections of the canal network and drive traffic off,⁹ but Huish, for example, certainly took the threat seriously.¹⁰ The situation was complicated by the fact that the Midland railway was not complete in 1847 and that company was willing to let Pickfords continue its canal service where there were gaps in the system. As late as 1849 Pickfords advertised water-borne services on the Trent and Humber "and by canal to the iron districts in the neighbourhood of Tipton and Wolverhampton."¹¹ The LNWR complained sharply about these activities, regarding them as a breach of the contract.¹² but the problem tended to solve itself as the gaps in the Midland line were filled and that company too required Pickfords to abandon the canals. By 1850 the number of Pickfords' boat horses was down to 14, from 107 in 1848 and even these had gone by 1853.¹³

For several years the affairs of the agency did not progress smoothly. One reason was the fierce competition between Pickfords and Chaplin & Horne. The monthly conferences with the LNWR goods managers were marked by bitter exchanges between the agents. According to D.Stevenson, "their implacable competition with one another, in seeking the trade, was a source of weakness to the

9 Evidence of Mr. J.S. Pixton, second report, S.C. on Railway and Canal Bills, PP 1852-3 (XXXI) Q293 ff.

10 Gourvish Op.cit. p 185 ff.

11 Glasgow directory 1849-50 Appendix p 149.

12 LNW 1/221, 20 Nov. 1848; 12 Jan, 9 Feb. 1849.

13 Pic 4/25 p 73; Pickfords agreed to take off the remainder of its competing boats in September 1849. LNW 1/221 14 Sept. 1849. However, Pickfords continued to operate a few canal boats which conveyed pig-iron and coal, on the Birmingham, Dudley and Stourbridge canals in south Staffordshire as part of the agency agreement. This did not cease until 1901, when the agency was terminated and the boats sold to the Shropshire Union canal company. See Cartage and Agency committee minutes 15 Dec. 1887 LNW 1/573; also evidence Mr. B.Howell; R.C. on Canals and waterways Vol V [Cd.4840] 1909 Q.41189.

company; for the agents would expend as much strength in getting customers from one another as in drawing them from railways and other competitive services... Mr. Horne threw all his excitable and inexhaustible energy into the combat; while the three sons of Mr. Baxendale took the management of Pickford & Co.'s department with increased personal feeling and angry opposition."¹⁴

Pickfords was particularly aggrieved at being excluded from the parcels traffic sent by the passenger trains and seemed to feel that the terms of the contract were generally biased in favour of Chaplin & Horne. Despite assurances from Chaplin & Horne that parcels traffic was neither as valuable nor important as Pickfords believed it to be, Pickfords nonetheless regarded this as the major reason why, between 1847 and 1850, it failed to provide the volume of tonnage proportionate to its share of the agents' remuneration as originally set. When the contract was renegotiated in 1851 Pickfords pressed hard for a portion of the parcels traffic, but was unable to persuade the directors to make any change. Instead Pickfords had to accept a cut in its share of the commission.¹⁵ Pickfords also felt that unfavourable comparisons made with Chaplin & Horne, especially concerning Pickfords' higher cartage costs in London, were unfairly based.¹⁶ So rivalry deepened, and spilled over on to London's streets where disputes over the right of way between drivers of the firms' vehicles added to the existing hazards of the City's traffic congestion.¹⁷

14 D. Stevenson Fifty years on the London and North Western Railway p 21.

15 Correspondence between Pickfords and Huish, and Chaplin & Horne, May to October 1851, Pic. 3/3. See also the revised agency agreement 1 Jan., 1852 Pic. 3/3.

16 LNW 1/221 14 Feb., 11 March, 14 April, 12, 19, May 1948.

17 Chambers' Journal, 20 Oct. 1866, p 659.

When it suited them, however, the two sides could show a united front. The renewal in 1852 of their contract with the Midland railway company had provided for a deduction from the agents' commission of 5% rising to 6% during its term.¹⁸ In 1855 Pickfords and Chaplin & Horne applied for relief from this provision on the grounds that fodder prices, the fall of which in 1852 had been one of the chief justifications for the reduction, had now risen sharply. Combined with a 20% increase in the price of horses, their income from the company's traffic was claimed to no longer cover working costs. Although they sought strength in a joint communication to the board they failed to get any relief. They were told, in effect, that having in the past enjoyed good profits they would have to absorb their losses. A further attempt later in the year to renegotiate their contract on mutually agreed terms - "as it will be useless for us to hold out for one amount and you for another" - seems to have been equally unsuccessful. The directors presented their terms virtually on a 'take-it-or-leave-it' basis.¹⁹ In such exchanges the railway company held the upper hand, and, provided the terms offered were not wholly unreasonable, the two firms had little option but to accept.

The same pattern of relationships was repeated in dealings with the LNWR, a second cause of friction in the early years of the agency, especially on Pickfords' side. Chaplin & Horne had its complaints to make but, being new to the carrying trade²⁰ and having been railway agents probably from the outset, was

18 Pic. 3/18.

19 Correspondence between Midland railway company, Pickfords, and Chaplin & Horne May-Dec. 1855, Pic. 3/19.

20 Stevenson Op.cit. p 21.

basically content with its position. Pickfords, by contrast, seems to have been resentful of its lost independence in railway traffic and far less comfortable in the role of willing agent. In addition there was an animus against a major component of the new company to be dispelled and, without imputing blame, the presence in leading positions of ex-Grand Junction officers like Huish and Braithwaite Poole no doubt ensured that old rivalries died slowly.

The railway company firmly controlled all aspects of the agency work.²¹ All carriage rates were set down by the company and had to be strictly observed. Collection and delivery services were to be charged at cost, as determined by an audit of the agents' books. The settlement of claims for all amounts over £5 was reserved to the company. The agents' duties and obligations were scheduled in detail, thereby virtually eliminating any scope for discretionary action. In general the agents were expected to devote themselves to the company's concern, if necessary at the expense of their own.

The agents' dependent status was heavily emphasised, something which rankled with Pickfords. As an independent concern Pickfords was accustomed to referring non-actionable disputes to arbitration procedures, but this the LNWR refused to concede. In all cases the company's decision was to be final. In 1851 Pickfords raised the point of arbitration. It felt that the proposed terms for the renewal of the agency agreement conferred on the company wide powers to dispense with Pickfords' services,

21 The following paragraphs are based on the series of contract renewals Pic. 3/3 to Pic. 3/12.

entirely at the directors' discretion. Pickfords sought to define the company's powers more closely but stated its willingness to accept them unreservedly if the company would agree to an arbitration clause. The company offered a vague qualification that the powers were chiefly cautionary to Pickfords' good conduct and would not be exercised without cause, but continued to refuse arbitration as not "consistent with our relative positions."²² There is no immediate explanation of why the LNWR should refuse to concede something which the Midland railway company had provided for since 1847.²³ The LNWR did not change its attitude until 1866.

An initial sharp discord between Pickfords and the LNWR is not too surprising.²⁴ Dispute immediately arose over the accounts for the first half year's working of the agency, to December 1847. The LNWR regarded Pickfords' cartage charges as excessive and made a deduction from its allowance. A matter of £1,000 was in dispute. Pickfords believed its accounts represented true cost, felt badly treated and consequently refused to settle. The controversy continued until October 1848 when strong hints that the company would consider terminating the contract apparently persuaded Pickfords that it was time to settle in full. There was no similar recurrence. In November 1848 satisfaction was expressed at the figures for the half-year to June, and Pickfords was urged to co-operate fully with the company for the future. By 1850 the agency had settled down and relations improved. The most serious objection the LNWR could

22 Pickfords to Huish, 16 July 1851, Pic 3/13

23 Pic. 3/16 clause 33: however, disputes over cartage rates were excluded.

24 The following paragraph is based on LNWR 1/221, passim

raise was that "the names of the agents were placed on the carts and waggons in larger letters and in a far more conspicuous position than the name of the company." At the end of the year, when the question of renewing the contract came up, it was felt that the interests of both the company and the agents had been satisfactorily met and so, with the modifications already noted, the contract was continued for a further seven years.

In subsequent years the LNWR became a little more accommodating in its conditions. It retained tight control of the working but was willing to accept a greater share of the agents' costs. In 1858, for example, in addition to the 5% interest already allowed on the agents' stock employed for contract work, it began to allow as deductable expenses the replacement cost of vehicles and equipment. It also accepted a wider share of risk. Even so the grounds for disharmony continued. Under the agency Pickfords retained the working of the Camden depot, free from inspection by the railway company's officers, even after the premises had been sold to the LNWR. In 1858, the accusation was made that Pickfords was abusing its position at Camden by diverting traffic away from the company. Pickfords has been allowed to send goods it collected in London for the Midland line by way of the Great Northern. D.Stevenson, an officer of the LNWR goods' department reported his suspicion to Richard Moon, one of the directors, that Pickfords was advising members of the public to take traffic which had been brought to Camden and should have gone by the company's route to its premises at King's Cross.²⁵ He suggested that the removal of the

25 Stevenson to Moon 4, 8 Oct., 1858, HL 2/19, R427; also Stevenson Op.cit. p 33 ff.

agents from their control of the London goods sheds was a necessary step in the company's interests, a proposal which was implemented by Moon when he took over as chairman of the LNWR. B.W. Horne opposed the move by seeking an injunction but his application failed. Pickfords' only known reaction was to promptly remove its best men from the Camden depot.

This episode, which probably occurred in 1864,²⁶ seems to have marked the culmination of a phase of deteriorating relations between Pickfords and the LNWR.²⁷ The terms of the renewed contract in 1866 suggests that an effort was being made to patch up differences. Not only was arbitration written into the agreement for the first time but a special clause was introduced which called on each side to help the other in speeding up the dispatch of traffic. As an inducement Pickfords was offered increased commission of 4d. per ton on all additional traffic which its exertions brought on to the line.²⁸

Throughout this period the LNWR had engaged in cartage work on its own account to a limited extent, chiefly outside of London, but in 1877 the company decided to deal directly with parcels delivery and collection in London. Chaplin & Horne's agency work was absorbed into the general traffic of the company and many of the firm's receiving offices were taken over. Chaplin & Horne's loss was Pickfords' gain for at last the firm received a share of the company's parcels traffic. Pickfords had been developing a parcels business in London and its various receiving offices were now opened to the reception of LNWR parcels traffic.

26 In his diary Joseph Hornby Baxendale speaks of Pickfords "entirely altering the terms and conditions" on which it worked for the LNWR. Pic. HH.

27 In November 1862 Pickfords had written to Moon complaining about increasing delays in the goods traffic and the difficulty in getting any replies from the company to complaints.

28 Pic. 3/6.

Pickfords' salary was the booking fee charged on all parcels, which the LNWR undertook to collect daily at regular intervals.²⁹ Pickfords became sole agent to the LNWR and shared traffic only with the company itself. After this the agency agreement continued with only minor modification in its terms until the end of the nineteenth century.

The agency agreement with the LNWR, the largest and most influential of the railway companies, was the means by which Pickfords escaped the demise of the canal fly-trade and found security in the new order of railway transportation. The degree of success with which Pickfords made the transition was really quite remarkable. Within a short space of time and with no diminution of its public name, Pickfords shed one personality as the country's premier canal carrier and acquired the new one of leading railway agent. Soon after 1850 Pickfords had already come to be regarded as an integral part of the railway machine.³⁰ It was later claimed that Pickfords' name was "as much identified with railways as the name of Stephenson or Brunel... If Pickfords [was] to cease to be tomorrow, a good quarter of the business of London, Manchester, Liverpool & Birmingham, would be paralysed for a week."³¹

So Pickfords transferred from canals to railways with considerable success, but little further is known directly about the development of the business in the second half of the nineteenth century. Virtually no primary evidence survives for this period and it is necessary to rely very heavily on secondary and indirect evidence.

29 Stevenson Op.cit. p 43; Neele Railway Reminiscences pp 220-221; supplementary memorandum of agreement Pic. 3/8.

30 Household Words 27 June 1857 p 606.

31 Newspaper cutting, unidentified daily paper (?London) 1872 (? 21 May) CHP /33.

The general impression which emerges from contemporary references to Pickfords is of a vigorous and healthy concern. In the 1860s Dickens, reporting on various forms of horse transport in London, visited Pickfords' depot at Camden Town, where he was "at once struck with an air of substantiality which is different to anything we have yet seen during this tour."³² A year or so later Henry Mayhew toured Pickfords' main business premises in London. He was forcibly struck by the bustle he saw and the scale of the firm's activities. Pickfords' headquarters at the Castle was "an enormous mercantile establishment with a huge staff of busy clerks, messengers and porters" from which a close supervision was maintained of all aspects and offices of the business. He was 'amazed' and 'bewildered' at the size and complexity of Pickfords' railway warehouses at Haydon Square and Camden Town, and the great range and volume of traffic handled there. Pickfords' establishment at City Basin, then chiefly used as warehouse and storage space, had "an air of substantial sedentary wealth".³³ After allowing for the hyperbole, Mayhew's impression of Pickfords reinforces that of Dickens.

The indications of expanding business in London are the acquisition by Pickfords of additional premises in several parts of the city and the reconstruction of existing premises in Oxford Street and also of the Castle in Wood Street.³⁴

32 All the Year Round 25 July 1863 pp 522-4.

33 H. Mayhew The Shops and offices of London (1865) pp 49-51, p 144. I must thank Dr. J.R.Kellett for this reference.

34 Building News February 1876 a cutting in Pic. 4/25 p 47.

There are odd hints of expansion outside of London. It appears that the extension of services into Kent, begun in the 1840s, was continued. Dickens' 'uncommercial traveller', on his return after a lapse of years to his native Dullborough (Rochester), lamented the disappearance of some of his boyhood haunts, including Timpson's coach office. This, together with adjoining buildings, had been knocked down and replaced by "one great establishment with a pair of big gates, in and out of which [Pickfords'] waggons are, in these days, always rattling".³⁵ Striking further afield, a Paris office was projected in 1851, but Pickfords was advised it would be able to penetrate the existing firms' control, even of the Anglo-French traffic.

Presumably new offices were opened elsewhere, but there is no further evidence. It is also difficult to assess the cost to the firm of capital invested in depots specific to the canal trade which had to be written-off when the canals were abandoned. How far was the loss of canal business off-set by the growth of railway traffic? There is no way of answering this question directly. The essential task is to estimate net expansion for the total concern, for which the number of branch offices is only one, and far from being the most useful, method of approach. The desired indicators are the quantity of transactions and their price - for Pickfords, how far total traffic increased and what this meant in terms of revenue and profits.

35 C. Dickens, The Uncommercial Traveller (first published 1861: Dickens' Centenary edition 1911) pp 138-9.

There is every reason to believe that the volume of traffic handled by Pickfords increased. The extension of steam and associated technologies to so many sections of the British economy after 1850, the supply of the industrial needs of continental Europe and North America, and rising demand at home brought about boom conditions which lasted for twenty-odd years. Rising rates of growth of total output exerted a strong demand on transport services of all kinds to convey raw materials, export products and especially commodities for domestic consumption. The railway industry felt the chief effect of these pressures. Total freight conveyed by rail rose rapidly, almost in leaps and bounds, from 64m. tons in 1856, when tonnage figures are first available, to 122m. in 1866 and 250m. in 1882. Between 1843, from which date there are receipt figures, and 1856 revenue from goods traffic rose, in absolute values, by a factor of eight.³⁶ The growth curve of freight receipts in this period has been characterised as that of the 'new industry' type. Over the next thirty years, during which average receipts per ton of goods carried was falling, gross receipts tripled in absolute value.³⁷ Although the greater part of this increase doubtless came from freight of low unit value, a proportion of the traffic, rising in absolute terms, would be the parcels and general merchandise handled by Pickfords and Chaplin & Horne.

The expansion of railway traffic alone required a proportionate increase in urban cartage and delivery services.³⁸

36 Mitchell and Deane British historical statistics Table 5 p 225.

37 Hawke Railways and economic growth p 56, p 58 and fig.III .03

38 Kellest Impact of railways pp 287-8.

Far from destroying road haulage, railways positively promoted its extension, as adapted to the new needs of the economy. Pickfords, for example, owned some 850 horses in 1846 of which between a quarter to a third were employed in London: twenty years later the total was 1468, with well over half working in London. In 1878 the number had reached almost 2000, and London retained the same proportion.³⁹ The number of persons employed in all branches of road transport in London similarly increased; the number of carmen and carters rose from 14,700 in 1861 to 43,800 in 1891. By 1891 road transport workers, with their dependents, were one of the largest occupational groups in the city.⁴⁰ Not all of this expansion was a function of railways. Even in the 1860s road haulage was genuinely competitive with railways for certain sections of traffic for distances within a 10 mile radius of London.⁴¹ The sheer weight of London in the total economy combined with the size of its associated urban area set in motion trends which became prominent outside of London only much later in the century.

A major influence on the development of urban cartage was the expansion of small parcels traffic. Small, or 'coach' parcels as they were originally called, were not new of course. They had been a valuable source of revenue to the stage-coaches and

39 Pic.4/25. p 73. The figure for 1878 is from information supplied by Mr. Keith Chivers from his researches for the Shire Horse Society. Pickfords became famous for its horses in this period. See The Bailie 22 Sept. 1886, portrait of Mr. William McCulloch, Pickfords' horse-buyer.

40 Kellett, Op.cit. p 288 citing Charles Booth, Vol. VII p 284.

41 Ibid.

Pickfords' rivalry with the Grand Junction railway company was expressed in the issue of control of this traffic. Developments in the second half of the nineteenth century gave a wider meaning and greater importance to this class of traffic.

The penny post, the telegraph, and later on the telephone, revolutionised internal communications both in terms of efficiency and cost. This, together with railway transportation, stimulated major changes in the pattern of traffic.⁴² Apart from the growth of trade consequent upon the greater perfection of the market, retailers and other traders, in any part of the country, were enabled to order goods regularly, even daily, and in small quantities instead of infrequently and in bulk as before. Both wholesalers and railway companies found that, as a result, the number of individual orders and consignments grew out of all proportion to the absolute growth of traffic. Speed of dispatch became a priority, and the flow of regular consignments or 'shop-goods', as they were known, increased the demand for cartage and delivery services to and from the railway stations in London and the major towns. Over short distances, roads could out-compete railways for such traffic.⁴³

London was big enough to generate a sufficiently large volume of internal parcels traffic to support firms which specialised in this line of business. As early as 1838 the London Parcels Delivery Company had been formed to exploit this

42 The following is based on E.A.Pratt Railways and their rates (1906) p 90 ff.

43 Evidence of Mr. J.F.S. Gooday, general manager of the Great Eastern railway company, R.C. on London Traffic Vol. II [Cd. 2751] 1905 Q.18552 ff.

traffic within the twopenny post limits of the metropolitan area but the main expansion seems to have come from about 1860. Carter Paterson & Co. was founded in that year specifically to exploit this branch of business and by the 1870s the traffic was sufficiently attractive to persuade the LNWR to take Chaplin & Horne's agency into its own hands. Despite being excluded by the LNWR from a share in its parcels traffic until 1877, Pickfords developed an interest in this line of business in London on its own account. By the late 1870s Pickfords had adopted the title of 'town carrier'. In 1880 six firms, exclusive of railway companies, were reported as dealing with parcels traffic, of which Carter Paterson & Co., with 14 receiving offices, and Pickfords, with 16, were by far the largest.⁴⁵ The emphasis was on efficiency and speed of service,⁴⁶ the needs of which were met by the development of a special type of light-weight delivery van. 'Pickfords' van acquired a new meaning and a new notoriety. Competition from the Post Office's parcels service only began in 1883⁴⁷ and until the first world war was confined to parcels which weighed eleven pounds or less.

Another potential source of traffic lay in the 'shopping revolution' of the later nineteenth century associated with the growth of department stores and multiple trading. Not only road passenger transport would be stimulated by this development. If the District railway company found it worthwhile, in 1892,

⁴⁵ C. Dickens Dictionary of London (1880) p 208.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Two of the firms listed were called 'Parcels Express'.

⁴⁷ Sherrington Op.cit. p 228. Prior to that date Rowland Hill's proposals for a parcels post had been opposed by the railway companies. R.Hill and G.B.Hill The Life of Sir Rowland Hill (1880) Vol. 2 p 336.

to put on a parcels service "chiefly to relieve shoppers on their homeward journey"⁴⁸ it is at least possible that some of this traffic came into the hands of the parcels firms. However the more direct stimulus is likely to have been on the side of heavy cartage, for the success of both the department and retail stores depended on the solution of supply problems. The provision dealers like Lipton, Home & Colonial and Maypole imported large quantities of butter and bacon for which cartage would be necessary from dock or railhead to a central store for subsequent reconsignment to branches. As their trade was in fresh foods, efficient transport services would be essential, but this aspect of such firms' activities has not received attention.⁴⁹ However it seems that Pickfords managed to extract advantage from these conditions.

From the 1860s,⁵⁰ Pickfords was contracting to supply firms which had bulk transport needs with the carts and horses required or to perform the entire job itself. The customer was saved overhead expenses on this account, a factor of some appeal to firms like Maypole and Lipton which sought to keep their capital liquid,⁵¹ while the contractor could benefit from economies of scale on his existing investment. No details survive of the individual firms with which Pickfords dealt in this period, but a contract with Peek Frean & Co. was taken over from McNamara

& Co. in 1896, and contracts with Home & Colonial and Maypole

48 T.C.Barker and M. Robbins A history of London Transport, Vol. I, The Nineteenth Century (1963) p 202.

49 P.Mathias, Retailing revolution (1967) pp 173-4 comments that a highly efficient distribution system was one of the great achievements of the multiple provisions dealers but does not enter into the detailed mechanics of how the supply and distribution side was organised.

50 An article in Pickfords' old house magazine Driving Mirror Winter 1946/7, Vol. I, No. 1, p 6, stated that there was no record of when contracts became a separate department but that several accounts still handled had stood in the books for over fifty years and one for eighty years.

51 Mathias Op.cit. p 173, on the practice of the Maypole Dairy company to rent rather than purchase its shop premises so as to keep capital turning over in the business. The same principle was applied by Lipton and others.

in London and Lewis's in Birmingham were well established by the beginning of the twentieth century.

The growth of London's suburbs, which in part underlies the preceding discussion, further widened the already extensive market for road transport services, as the carman followed the horsebus and horse tram into the inner suburbs. Pickfords made a strong bid for a share in a growing volume of suburban traffic. The renewals of the LNWR contract in 1881 and 1887 contained a special clause by which the railway company agreed to give to Pickfords all the goods traffic it could for delivery in the suburban districts of London "beyond the limits of free cartage and delivery."⁵² In the 1880s leases were held or acquired of premises in Chalk Farm, Deptford, Penge and Stratford, while in the 1890s premises were bought, probably often the freehold of property already leased, in Balham, Brentford, Brixton, Edmonton, Finsbury Park, Fulham, Kingston, Pimlico and Walthamstow, and Croydon, Caterham and Lee (Kent) further afield.⁵³ Each depot worked a number of collection and delivery districts and traffic collected for dispatch by rail or for delivery in other parts of London was transferred to a central depot overnight and then reconsigned to the appropriate delivery point. It was clearly in the 1880s that Pickfords developed its 'London and Suburban Town Cartage' service of the early twentieth century.

The adoption of new lines of business widened the traffic base on which Pickfords could draw. One such development was the forwarding of goods overseas. Pickfords had become Custom

⁵² Pic. 3/10 and Pic. 3/12.

⁵³ Register of London Premises Pic. 4/13. Compare with the list of Pickfords' London suburban agencies, Board Minutes 23 April 1902 Pic. 1/2.

House agents in London by the later 1830s,⁵⁴ and extended these activities to Liverpool and Southampton, Dublin, Edinburgh and Glasgow by the mid century.⁵⁵ The clearance of goods for shipping and payment of duty on bonded goods were included among Pickfords advertised services in 1881. By this time Pickfords has ceased to act in Scotland but operated in Bristol, Portsmouth and West Hartlepool instead. Pickfords was, by then, agent to the East and West India Dock companies and also forwarded goods daily to the Continent. Quotations would be given for through rates to Paris and most of the major European cities.⁵⁶

Pickfords had, in addition, a more direct interest in shipping. In 1897 the firm bought the lease, and some of the freehold, of Phoenix Wharf, Clink Street, in Southwark and renamed it Pickfords' Wharf.⁵⁷ How long Pickfords had held the lease and what was the precise nature of the traffic handled at the wharf, and in what capacity, cannot be determined. Pickfords' shipping interests also included a service of sailing boats - carrying general cargoes from Portsmouth and Southampton to the Isle of Wight, begun about the mid-1870s.⁵⁸ A fleet of four steam vessels was introduced in the 1880s. It is not known why this service was started.

54 Joseph Hornby Baxendale records in his Diary that he joined this branch of Pickfords' business when he started with the firm that year. Pic. HH.

55 Glasgow directory 1848-49, appendix p 152; 1853-4, appendix p 158; 1854-5, appendix p 219.

56 London Post Office directory 1881 (Traders & Court) Conveyance directory p 2478.

57 Register London Premises Pic. 4/13. entry for Pickfords' Wharf.

58 Register of County Premises Pic. 4/14. Pickford leased several premises in Portsmouth in the later 1860s and property in Southampton in 1875. One of the original sailing boats was still in use in 1906.

Household removals had also emerged as a distinct line of business by 1900. Again this service was advertised in 1881, but how much earlier it had existed is unknown.

A case, therefore, can be made for an increase in the volume of traffic from all sources handled by Pickfords in the years after 1850. What this meant in terms of revenue and profits is much more difficult to assess. The bulk of traffic receipts accrued to the railway companies. As an independent carrier, by road, canal or rail, Pickfords had determined the price of conveyance and received the whole of the sum due. But as railway agent, freight rates were set by the railway company and Pickfords' share of the receipts was reduced to its cartage allowances, tonnage commission and other bonuses.⁵⁹ The rate of return to Pickfords per ton of traffic handled probably dropped sharply, but the rapid growth of traffic would have more than off-set this effect. It can only be assumed that Pickfords' total revenue increased.

It is equally difficult to assess what situation Pickfords faced on the side of costs. Increased traffic would presumably mean a proportionate increase in operating costs. There was, however, some benefit in this respect of being agent to a railway company. In addition to supplying the means of conveyance, the railway companies leased warehouse, stabling and office

59 For example by its agreement with the South Eastern railway company in 1858 (Pic 3/15) Pickfords received a 10% allowance on its account in exchange for waiving its claims to bulk small parcels and to be charged the same rate for the same class of goods as customers who had a special agreement with the company.

space to their agents at low rents.⁶⁰ Pickfords also received an allowance from the LNWR for its working stock employed on agency contract business.

One of the major components of costs for a firm employing a large number of horses, and Pickfords owned about 2000 horses in the later 1870s, was that of provender. The relationship between rising fodder costs and increased road haulage charges in the eighteenth century has already been noted. For the later nineteenth century T.C.Barker and M. Robbins have remarked on the contribution of cheap imported fodder to the profits of the London horse bus companies.⁶¹ For the years under discussion here the role of fodder prices in governing Pickfords' operating costs is most clearly seen in the fluctuations of cartage rates allowed to Pickfords by the LNWR and the Midland railway company. The contract terms of both companies required that their agents' cartage services should be performed at cost. A reduction in the rate allowed, would, therefore, imply a fall in costs. The fact that the cost of provender was a, if not the, prime factor in the calculation is demonstrated by the reduction made by the Midland company in 1852 explicitly on the grounds that fodder prices had fallen since 1847 when the original, higher, rate had been set. Pickfords' application in 1855 for a revision of this rate because feed costs had

60 This might not have been effective until the 1880s. The LNWR contract of 1887 (Pic 3/12) contained a schedule of premises leased from the company by Pickfords in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and elsewhere, for which Pickfords paid a rent of £2750 p.a., free of rates and taxes. Provision was also made for the use of additional premises should they be necessary for the working of the contract. There is no evidence as to whether such provision was made earlier. In 1858 the railway company had already agreed to meet the replacement cost of Pickfords' waggons, vans and sheets used in the agency work.

61 Barker and Robbins History of London transport p 243 ff.

sharply risen reinforces the point.⁶² On the basis of changes in the cartage rates allowed by the LNWR to Pickfords, fodder prices did not fall substantially until the beginning of the 1880s, by which time the impact of cheap imported fodder might be expected to have been effective, but then remained stable for a decade.⁶³ Although a lowering of provender costs would not result in any benefit in Pickfords' railway agency work, gains should have accrued, in the form of increased profits, on the rest of the firm's business. It is impossible, however to be any more specific.

Table 10.1 gives an estimate of Pickfords' profits for the years 1848 to 1870. The figures show higher average profits, in absolute money values, for the years 1848 to 1862 than in the preceding thirty years.⁶⁴ The previous best was an average of £24,500 during 1838 to 1842. Between 1848 and 1857 this performance was maintained and slightly improved upon, while the years 1858 to 1862, at an average of £34-35,000, show the best returns up to 1870. This higher average contained three particularly good years 1859-1861; at £43,800, 1859 was the best single year after 1838. Economic recovery after the severe depression of 1858 is the most likely explanation of this performance.⁶⁵ Railway freight receipts rose by £2.8m during

the same three years. Another high spot was in 1870 with profits

62 The estimates of Pickfords' profits, Table 10.1, for 1848-56 show a significant statistical correlation with hay prices for the same years as recorded by T. Tooke and W. Newmarch A history of prices and the state of the circulation during the nine years 1848-1856 Vol. VI (1857) p 454 ff.

63 In 1866 the allowance fell from 7/- to 6/6 per ton but rose again to 7/- in 1873. By 1879 the rate had drifted to 6/9 and fell to 6/3 in 1881. It remained at this figure until 1892 when, by a special agreement, it was increased by 4d per ton. For this last point, see the endorsement to the Pic.HH. copy of the 1887 agreement.

64 See appendix 2 for further comment.

65 J.R.T. Hughes Fluctuations in trade, industry and finance. A study of British economic development 1850-1860 (Oxford 1960) pp. 27-33.

TABLE 10.1. Pickfords' estimated profits 1848-1870

<u>Credit of stock account</u>			<u>Computed distributed profits</u>			
			<u>Total profits</u>			
<u>Year ended 31 Mar.</u>	<u>Total per five year period</u>	<u>Annual average</u>	<u>Baxendale's share</u>	<u>per annum</u>	<u>Annual average</u>	<u>Total per five year period</u>
1848			6985	(2) 13970		
1849			14066	28132		
1850			18868	37736		
1851			16856	33712		
1852	<u>127517</u>	<u>25503</u>	11086	22172	<u>27144</u>	<u>135722</u>
1853			11979	23958		
1854			8476	16952		
1855			11090	22180		
1856			8102	16204		
1857	<u>126004</u>	<u>25200</u>	15238	30476	<u>21954</u>	<u>109770</u>
1858			9346	18692		
1859			21924	43848		
1860			15008	30016		
1861			17500	35000		
1862	<u>178599</u>	<u>35719</u>	12170	24340	<u>34379</u>	<u>171896</u>
	<u>(Total per annum)</u>					
1863	20011		5003	(4) 20012		
1864	25023		4506	18024		
1865	18624		4656	18624		
1866	20245		2411	9644		
1867	16908	20182	4237	16948	16628	
1868	25310					
1869	28216					
1870	41809	31775				

of £41,800. In contrast to these figures the returns for 1863-67 emerge as distinctly poor, especially when viewed against an increase of £4.7m. in railway freight receipts over the same period.

With the available data it is impossible to assess whether these profits would be considered a good or poor response to trading opportunities. It is clear, however, that Joseph Baxendale was dissatisfied with Pickfords' performance in the mid-1860s. He made his feelings known in several letters, chiefly to his eldest son Joseph Hornby Baxendale. In July 1866 he expressed concern at the level of earnings and expenses and later his "serious discomfort and alarm" at the way the business was left to take care of itself. In August 1868 he again voiced his anxiety. Baxendale was clearly disappointed with his sons and implied that they lacked application to business and enterprising management.⁶⁶ Joseph Hornby believed his father exaggerated. He conceded that he and his brothers did not possess their father's dedication but "we have hardly the same stimulus, yet the concern is sound and there is no fear for the property."⁶⁷ The brothers' proposals, in 1870, to sell Pickfords to the LNWR, although not implemented, must have come as a further disappointment to him. Baxendale was then in his eighty-second year, but the memories of past exertions were still vividly before his mind. He wrote, to his second son, Lloyd, how the years since 1816 up to the present had been a cause "of much anxiety both mental and bodily."⁶⁸ He

66 Joseph Baxendale to Joseph Hornby Baxendale 12 July, 4 Oct. 1866 F.P.

67 Joseph Hornby Baxendale to Joseph Baxendale 18 April, 1868 F.P.

68 Joseph Baxendale to Lloyd Baxendale 11 May 1870 F.P.

concluded,

"In closing the accounts for the year that has now passed, I will look with great attention. If those for whom the business has been kept together will not think it worth-while to give the necessary attention to the affairs, this will be an important question in looking for an arrangement with the London & North Western Railway whilst I am still with you."

After 1870 no figures are available until the later 1890s when for the years 1896 and 1897 net profits averaged £59,200 falling to £32,900 over the next two years. The rate of return to capital fell over the four years from 13.41% to 6.37%.⁶⁹ Nothing can be said directly of the intervening years. Carter Paterson & Co., which specialised and rivalled Pickfords in the London parcels trade, experienced mixed success between 1888 and 1892, but then profits rose strongly to a peak in 1897. During 1898-9 Carter Paterson's profits fell back, although not so sharply as Pickfords'. Perhaps Pickfords broadly shared Carter Paterson's earlier experience.⁷⁰ Pickfords' finances were felt to be sufficiently healthy for a considerable sum of money to be sunk in land and premises. In the London area alone, almost £120,000 was invested in freehold property and land purchases, during the 1890s, together with a further £8000 for the assignment of several long leases. Between March 1896 and March 1901 the value of Pickfords' premises as entered on the balance sheet rose from £250,000 to £470,000, an increase of over 85%.

69 All of the figures for Pickfords used in this paragraph are from materials in the Carter Paterson records CP 4/27. The fall in the percentage rate of return overstates the position a bit because the capital figure on the basis of which the calculation was made rose from £440,000 to £510,000, an increase of some 15%.

70 Minutes of meetings of proprietors and Board of directors 1887-1900 CP 1/1.

In 1900 Pickfords' fortunes were still under the guidance of the Baxendale family but by then new faces had made their appearance in the board room. Pickfords had belonged entirely to the Baxendales since 1850 when Elizabeth Pickford, Thomas Pickford's widow, sold the family's remaining interest. Joseph Baxendale was then no longer active in the daily management of the firm but as a partner kept a sharp watch over his interests. Scarcely any detail has survived of Baxendale's later life. In the 1850s he spent a lot of time in France presumably in connection with his railway activities there. In 1845 he had joined the board of the East India railway company and continued to be concerned with its affairs fifteen years later. For the rest he seems to have withdrawn into the private life of his family.⁷¹ Joseph Baxendale died in 1872, at the age of 84, leaving a personal estate of some £700,000.

He also left as an example to his successors a concern for the welfare of Pickfords' employees. In his will he directed that a sufficient portion of his 3% Consols be set aside to provide an income of £300 p.a. out of which annuities were to be paid to the men who had worked for him over so many years.⁷² Pickfords' grant of a retirement pension to employees with many years service to the company, carmen as well as clerks, was a well established practice by 1900 and continued the spirit of Baxendale's gesture. Pickfords' encouragement of the clerical staff's Provident Fund followed Baxendale's belief in the virtues

71 Baxendale's diary for those years contains only personal entries.

72 I must thank Mr. Thomas Baxendale for lending me his copy of the will.

of self-help. The fund was started in March 1878 to provide against "severe sickness, accident or misfortune of any kind"; it was open to all Pickfords' clerks on payment of a penny per week.⁷³ It was the partners' practice to donate to the fund a sum equal to the members' annual subscription.

Joseph Baxendale was not long survived by his sons. Richard Birley, the youngest of the three brothers who became partners,⁷⁴ died in 1878. Lloyd died in 1882, and Joseph Hornby in 1886. However a third generation of Baxendales was on the way. Joseph Hornby's son, Joseph William, joined Pickfords in 1871 and had become a partner by 1879. He was followed by Lloyd's two sons, Lloyd Harry and Francis Hugh, in 1879 and 1884. In 1894 when the partnership was reformed, Joseph William had succeeded his father as senior partner and had eight shares; Lloyd Harry had six, and Francis Hugh had three.⁷⁵ So things remained until 1901, when it was decided to convert the partnership into a private limited company.⁷⁶

Pickfords entered the twentieth century concerned with four main categories of business - parcels and general railway cartage, foreign traffic, contracts and household removals.⁷⁷ It had also become firmly rooted in London. Much of the preceding discussion has been centred on London in part because virtually all the surviving evidence relates to Pickfords' activities in London but also because the forces which shaped Pickfords'

73 Pic 4/3 p 27.

74 Baxendale's fourth son, Salisbury, became a barrister.

75 Articles of partnership 31 Aug. 1894. Pic 3/28.

76 Notice of Pickfords' conversion to a private limited company Pic. 4/3, p 24.

77 A bond of 1894 designated Pickfords as "Carriers Warehousemen Furniture Removers and Custom House Clearers".

development in the later nineteenth century were most strongly felt in the London market. Pickfords did not lose touch with its origins in the north; the needs of the LNWR agency alone saw to that. But undoubtedly by 1900 the major part of Pickfords' business was transacted in London and the surrounding area.

PICKFORDS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Preliminary

By the beginning of the twentieth century Pickfords was predominantly a London firm, chiefly concerned with urban cartage business. Urban traffic was of two main kinds, parcels which were both collected and delivered within the London suburban area, and provincial traffic, consigned by railway, which was carted to and from the railway stations. The London parcels trade was contested by a group of firms which included, apart from Pickfords, the London Parcels Delivery Company, Sutton's, Atlas Express and several others. Competition between them was keen. However Pickfords and Carter Paterson, the two biggest companies engaged in the trade, had achieved a position of leadership.

Most of these firms specialised in parcels traffic and were restricted in their activities to the London area. The London Parcels Delivery Company was founded in 1838 "to carry goods, packages and parcels from and to all parts of the metropolis within the limits of the Two Penny Post."¹ Bean's Express commenced in the 1860s and specialised in the rapid delivery of drapery parcels.² Although their activities widened, both remained small, specialist firms. Carter Paterson, with which Pickfords was soon to amalgamate, grew from very small beginnings in 1860 to become by 1900 a firm of considerable size. It was founded to exploit the opportunities for collection and delivery services for railway traffic in the metropolitan suburban area. It thus had few if any depots outside the London area and

1. Articles of Association, 1912 CP 2/19;

2. The Window Card Vol. 3 No 5 September 1933 p 253.

consigned provincial traffic to local firms, including some commission agents, for delivery.

Pickfords differed from other firms in the trade in two major ways. Although Pickfords carried on a large cartage business, in London, which still included substantial agency work for the LNWR, this was far from being an exclusive interest. Contract work, household removals, shipping and forwarding all continued to have their place, and distinctly new lines were developed. In addition Pickfords' activities were not confined to the London area. Pickfords still owned a large number of provincial depots, now chiefly in the southern half of England. Unlike its competitors, Pickfords could offer collection and delivery services in the major provincial centres as well as in London. Pickfords thus maintained a central position in the London carrying trade without losing the features of a comprehensive and national transport company which had long characterised it.

CHAPTER 11

PICKFORDS IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY, 1901-1912

The new century brought wide ranging changes for Pickfords. In 1901 the partnership was converted into a private limited company. In the same year the long association with the LNWR, which had continued unbroken for over fifty years, was ended. Since more than half of Pickfords' railway traffic, which itself was a major part of the firm's business, had been, up to then, on account of the LNWR agency, the termination of the contract made substantial adjustment unavoidable. In addition a new mode of transportation, that of motor transport, soon began to make its challenge. Further re-organisation to accommodate motors was necessary, since the evolution of the existing road transport network had been controlled by the needs and limitations of horses. The first decade of the present century was a testing time for Pickfords, another transitional phase in some way comparable to the critical years earlier following the advent of railways.¹

Through all its vicissitudes during these years Pickfords enjoyed a reputation for enterprise and initiative.² But if this were taken to imply a firm well placed to meet the future from a position of strength then external appearances tended to deceive. Not that Pickfords' public reputation was undeserved; quite the contrary. Pickfords adopted motors without hesitation and showed imagination in building up an interest in travel and tourism. A number of 'firsts' were also achieved. Pickfords was

1 See chapters 6 and 8, and my article in Transport History Vol II, 1969. There is unfortunately a gap in Pickfords' records from March 1909 to June 1910.

2 The World's Carriers and Contractors Review, Vol. I (1905) p 77 quoting 'The Railway and Shipping Journal', Ibid Vol. 2 Jan 1906 p 96; Vol. 8 Jan 1912, p 98; The Motor World and Industrial Vehicle Review Vol 2, 26 May 1906, p 483; Motor Traction Vol. 2, 30 May 1906 p 484.

the first firm to make commercial use of motor barges for coastal traffic, on the Solent service.³ and was the first of the parcels firms to capitalise on the value of its delivery vans as saleable advertising space.⁴ Although such efforts illustrate Pickfords' enterprise they are not equally successful, apart from the case of advertising, in providing new sources of profit. Profits were what Pickfords particularly needed to meet a deteriorating financial position. Higher outgoings were being incurred but Pickfords' ability to meet them declined. The break with the LNWR reduced annual income and then the later withdrawal of J.W. Baxendale left Pickfords seriously undercapitalised. Inadequate resources undermined efforts to restore Pickfords' position and this was probably the chief reason why the decision was ultimately made to amalgamate with Pickfords' main competitors, including the chief rival Carter Paterson.

Some of these points will be examined at greater length below and then four main themes treated more extensively, the management of Pickfords, the decision to break with the LNWR and its effects, the adoption of motors, and the circumstances leading up to the amalgamation.

In March 1901 Pickfords was registered as a private limited company with an authorised capital of £500,000.⁵ The share capital actually issued, as paid-up, was £457,000, composed of £287,000 in £10 preference shares and the balance of £170,000 in £1 ordinary shares. J.W. Baxendale, previously senior partner,

3 The World's Carriers Vol 2 (1906) p 223; Motor Traction Vol.2 30 May 1906, pp 446-7; Vol.3 8 Aug. 1906 p 117, p 122.

4 The World's Carriers Vol. 8 (1912) p 98.

5 Pic 4/25 Various notes on the conversion.

and now the major shareholder with 15,200 preference and 70,000 ordinary shares, became chairman of the company. L.H.Baxendale held 7,800 preference and 60,000 ordinary shares and F.H.Baxendale held 5,700 preference and 40,000 ordinary shares. The number of directors was set at a minimum of three and a maximum of five, each of whom was required to have a qualifying holding of £10,000 preference or ordinary share capital. Both types of shares carried voting rights but preference shareholders could only vote on matters which directly related to their interest. Decisions on matters of general policy therefore lay with the ordinary share holders.

The distribution of ordinary shares was such that J.W. Baxendale, despite his position and the size of his capital holding, could be outvoted by his fellow directors. This was not so unreasonable as at first sight might appear. Given the much higher ratio of preference to ordinary shares, Baxendale carried significantly less risk than his two cousins. Moreover the work of active management lay chiefly with the latter, who received a salary of £1,000 per annum as director managers.⁶ Pickfords continued in its new form under the sole ownership and control of the Baxendale family, until 1902 when Nigel O. Walker was admitted to the Board.⁷ The only other director to be appointed before the amalgamation of 1912 was Guy Vernon Baxendale, the son of F.H.Baxendale.⁸

In the early years of the present century Pickfords' total staff, exclusive of casual labour, numbered 8 to 10,000 persons.⁹ London was the main centre of activities; there the majority of

⁶ Board Minutes 8 Jan 1902 Pic 1/2.

⁷ Ibid 19 Feb. 1902

⁸ Board Minutes 21 Aug 1912 Pic 1/9.

⁹ The size of the workforce expanded within this range. Pearson's Weekly 7 Dec.1905, at Pic 4/2; The Molassine World Dec 1906 p 430; The Times 23 April 1909; The World's Carriers, Vol. 5 (1909) p 186.

the workforce and the bulk of Pickfords' stock of horses and road vehicles was deployed. Urban cartage traffic was the chief business but Pickfords' lesser interests, like shipping and household removals, continued to have their place. On the whole, however, little of real substance can be said about them. Presumably Pickfords judged that conditions justified the £2,750 expended on two motor barges for the Isle of Wight trade but little further can be gleaned from the record.¹⁰ The profitability or otherwise of Pickfords' wharf broadly accords with general economic fluctuations as profits of £600 per annum during 1901 to 1906 deteriorated in 1907 and declined into deficits with the depression of 1908. Revival came with the recovery of trade.¹¹ Scope for expansion was felt to exist in the forwarding of goods overseas. Extra staff were taken on and efforts made to increase the volume of business handled, especially to France, but also to Germany and Belgium.¹² Opportunity was also seen in trade with South Africa and it was to develop this interest that a subsidiary company Pickfords Colonial was formed.¹³ Pickfords' shipping interests were said to be substantial¹⁴ but no details survive.

Important changes took place in the way in which various needs of the business were met. Much that had previously been contracted out was now brought under Pickfords' direct provision.

10 The first boat 'Wasp' cost £745: it was ordered in August 1905 and in service for July 1905. Board Minutes 16 Aug.1905, 4 July 1906. 'Bat' cost £2000 being introduced to the services in May 1912. Directors' committee 24 May 1911, 15 May 1912.

11 Profits on the wharf were recorded half yearly for 1901 to 1906, then monthly 1907-8, and in 1910 when the records are again available.

12 Board Minutes 1904, 1906 passim.

13 For the foundation of Pickfords Colonial, Board Minutes 9, 30 March 1904, Pic 1/4; 27 April, 6 May 1904 Pic 1/5.

14 Evidence of E.H.Beckwith, Pickfords Ltd., v. LNWR, Jan 1907 Pic 4/15.

Horses had long been chosen by Pickfords' own specialist buyers. Stock was obtained chiefly in Britain, but supplies were also sought in Ireland, Belgium, Denmark and America in an effort to find horses of the right quality and price. Previously the stock had been cared for by contract farriers and vets but in 1901 Pickfords employed its own vet and began to do part of its shoeing, a step which was sufficiently successful to be progressively extended. As to fodder, Pickfords had for years seen to its own needs but one of the consequences of terminating the LNWR contract was that premises at Camden and Haydon Square containing the firm's processing plant had to be given up. For a few years Pickfords made arrangements to draw its requirements from Carter Paterson but in 1909 acquired fresh premises and resumed its previous practice of supplying its own needs.¹⁵

The main consideration behind the moves seems to have been the belief that Pickfords could do the work itself more cheaply. The cost of shoeing was reduced, within a few weeks, by an annual saving of £450.¹⁶ Similar possibilities applied to the construction and maintenance of Pickfords' fleet of road vehicles, work that hitherto had been contracted out to two specialist firms of vehicle builders, Hazeldine and McDougall. Pickfords was dissatisfied both with the quality of their work, and the price charged. Failing to get satisfactory improvement, Pickfords started its own van works at Glasshouse Yard, Aldersgate Street where, from February, 1904,¹⁷ all new work and repairs were progressively concentrated. Again the venture was successful.

15 Carter Paterson's records, Board Minutes 30 Jan 1902 CP 1/1; 14 Oct 1909, also 26 Oct 1911 CP 1/2.

16 Board Minutes 8 Jan 1902 Pic 1/2

17 The Window Card Vol. 2 No 5 1931 p 244.

The balance sheet for Glasshouse Yard showed a profit of £3,800 in the first full financial year.¹⁸ For the three years 1909-11 Pickfords' profit and loss account credited an average £3,000 profit to the yard. Work was also done at the yard for other firms.

Another of Pickfords' needs was for waterproof sheets to cover parcels while on board the vans. The point of interest here is that the device of expanding an internal supply section into a commercial enterprise was repeated. The making and dressing of waterproof sheets was carried on at Terrace House, North Finchley. In March 1906 it was decided to convert this department into a separate business called The North Finchley Waterproofing Company. Although its main business continued to be the supply of Pickfords' needs, and the small profit made paid into Pickfords' general fund, under its new guise it took on the additional function of general carrier. In the summer of 1911 it was converted into a small limited company.¹⁹ In addition to creating a new company, Pickfords bought several small companies in London and elsewhere. One of these was Camp's, a small West End carrying business, which was bought in 1903 and run under its own name until it was absorbed into the general business at the end of June 1912.²⁰ Not only did it show a small profit but it served as the agency for two further purchases.²¹

To discuss Pickfords' overall financial position from 1896 to 1912 is to enter upon particularly difficult terrain. This is chiefly because of the partial nature of the surviving financial

18 Board Minutes Aug 1905, 19 July, 9, 16 Aug. 1905 Pic 1/6.

19 Ibid 7 March 1906 Pic 1/7; Directors' committee, 3, 10 May, 14 June, 2 Aug. 1911 Pic 1/16.

20 Board Minutes 27 May, 15 July 1903 Pic 1/4; Directors' committee 26 June 1912 Pic 1/17.

21 Saunders of Mortlake, and I.W. Sealby of Berwick Street Board Minutes 21 June, 2, 16 Aug., 1905 Pic 1/6.

records. The annual balance sheets and profit and loss accounts are available only from the financial year ending 30 June 1909.²² Before that half yearly and yearly accounts were presented to the annual general meeting but, except for June, 1905²³ the details were not recorded. Accounting principles are not explained and it has been impossible to discover how, for example, the recorded net profit figures were arrived at. Similarly it has not proved possible to estimate Pickfords' basic trading position, before interest, depreciation and other charges, by reconstructing gross trading profit. With regard to the overall financial position little can be said about the nature and value of Pickfords' reserves. No schedule of reserves, cash deposits or investments, survives for the period, while the figure placed upon the value of the reserves varies markedly over the years. It cannot be said whether the latter represent genuine alterations or different principles of valuation. Thus the data is slight and difficult to interpret: per contra the dangers of misconstruction are serious. What follows therefore is rather by way of general impression than confident assertion.

Taking all the evidence together the basic impression is that Pickfords was experiencing a period of financial stringency, with current earnings far from adequate to meet current requirements. The available data of most use is summarised in Table 11.1. The figures for 1896-1899 are included because they point the contrast with the next decade and also indicate that some deterioration was already occurring.

22 Pic 4/22 for the years 1909-1911; Pic 4/28, for 1912-1919

23 Minutes of General Meetings, 15 Nov 1905 Pic 1/1.

Table 11.1 Pickfords' financial position 1896 to 1913

	<u>Capital</u> ¹ £	<u>Receipts</u> £	<u>Net profit</u> £	<u>Profit as a percentage of capital</u>	<u>Profit as a percentage of receipts</u>	<u>Reserves</u> £
1896	430,637		59,265	13.41		36,204
1897	(478,000) ²		59,225	12.39		
1898	(509,700) ²		32,622	6.40		
1899	(519,200) ²		33,159	6.37		
1900	(457,000) ²	472,243	5,073	1.11	1.07	
1901	457,000					113,968
1905	457,000		8,602			
1909	171,800	442,559	- 279			56,618
1910	174,500	462,349	16,278	9.33	3.52	56,813
1911	174,500	488,402	15,435	8.85	3.16	63,359
1912	208,600		6,956 ³			137,100
1913	208,600	524,946	15,116	7.24	2.88	137,100

Source: The figures for 1896-1901 are from a draft scheme for amalgamation in 1901 CP 4/27; that for 1905 from Minutes of Annual General Meeting Pic 1/1; those for 1909-1913 from the relevant balance sheets and profit and loss accounts Pic 4/22 and Pic 4/28

- Notes
1. For 1896 and 1901, as at CP 4/27; 1897-1900 estimated, as note 2; 1908-1913, nominal share and loan capital
 2. The figures in brackets are calculated from columns 3 and 4.
 3. On a financial year of January to December 1912, from a statement of net profits declared to Hays Wharf Cartage Company Ltd., 6 May 1919(?), Pic HH, Accountant's office.

The total collapse of profits between 1899 and 1900 is inexplicable. The directors of Carter Paterson reported to their shareholders in the latter year that there had been marked increases in the cost of both materials and labour, but not apparently of such proportions as to explain a fall of this scale.²⁴ As prices continued to rise strongly the following year²⁵ it is not likely that profits recovered in 1901 and quite possibly fell even further. The only profit figure for the succeeding years is that for 1905, which suggests a small rally. The underlying trend, however, is perhaps indicated by the fact that the payment of dividends due in 1900 was not completed until June 1906.²⁶ After a small loss in 1909 profits recovered to a more hopeful level. In March 1910 an interim dividend of 2½% in ordinary shares was declared,²⁷ the first payment recorded since 1906.

Even in 1909, when the accounts show a loss, Pickfords no doubt made a crude trading profit for the year; provision for other charges pushed the account into deficit. In general Pickfords' current earnings seem to have been basically inadequate to meet recurrent costs and still show a profit. Depreciation charges presented a particular problem. It was noted that the profit declared for 1905 was considerably understated because of the amount which had been written off vehicles.²⁸ During 1901 almost 150 of Pickfords' vans were moth-balled, and a fair number of these were not brought back into active service. In addition the hopes of converting horse vehicles for use as

24 Directors' report to AGM, 9 Aug, 1900 CP 1/1.

25 Directors' report to AGM, 4 Oct, 1901 CP 1/2.

26 Minutes, General Meetings 14 Nov 1906 Pic 1/1.

27 Board Minutes 9 March 1910 Pic 1/9.

28 Minutes, General Meetings 15 Nov. 1905 Pic 1/1.

trailers with motors were disappointed so there was an element of obsolescence as well. It is impossible to be precise, but it is likely that the increasing use of motors raised the rate of obsolescence in Pickfords' existing stock. Motors themselves, especially in the early years, had a high rate of technical obsolescence.²⁹ Thus the factor of high depreciation charges is likely to have been a general trend rather than peculiar to one year.

A final point which suggests a difficult financial position is the extent to which Pickfords had recourse to borrowing, by necessity rather than choice. Pickfords main bank account, with Glyn Mills, was at times substantially over-drawn for several months. At £15,000 the bank asked for the directors' personal guarantee of repayment.³⁰ However the chief means of borrowing was by mortgage. From 1901 until the middle of 1905 a steady flow of loans was arranged by Pickfords' solicitors, on the security of various properties. The pressure then eased somewhat only to build up again in 1911 and 1912. Loans called in were replaced by new borrowings, and also two very large loans were negotiated, one for £100,000 from the Legal and General Assurance Society Ltd., the other for £195,000 from the Commercial Union Assurance Company Ltd.³¹ In 1912 Pickfords various mortgages totalled over £400,000.³²

The two large loans just mentioned followed upon a further change in the composition of Pickfords. In 1908 J.W.Baxendale

29 See the discussion on methods of depreciating motors in a firm's accounts, Commercial Motor Vol. 4 (1907) p 587; Ibid Vol.10 (1909) p 89.

30 For example the account remained in overdraft of £15,000 on these terms from Aug.1910 to Nov. 1911.

31 For the two major loans see Board Minutes 1912 passim Pic 1/9.

32 As recorded in Schedule 2 to the Agreement of amalgamation 28 Aug. 1912, CP 3/10.

left Pickfords: he was opposed to the policies being pursued by his two cousins.³³ In place of his original subscription of £220,000 preferred and ordinary shares he now received £166,000 4% Debenture Stock to terminate his interest in the firm.³⁴ Pickfords was then converted to Baxendales Ltd., and immediately went into voluntary liquidation, to be reconstructed as Pickfords Ltd. It was to finance the liquidation and reconstruction that Pickfords needed to borrow so heavily.³⁵ At the same time Pickfords share capital was heavily written down from the issued capital of £457,000 in March 1901 to £105,900. The net effect, therefore, of J.W.Baxendale's departure was to reduce Pickfords' capital resources and at the same time increase the burden of debt.

Constraints such as these, which are taken to underlie subsequent discussion, meant that the quality and character of the management capabilities of those responsible for Pickfords were put to the test. As their title indicates it was the task of L.H.Baxendale and F.H.Baxendale, the director managers,³⁶ to provide the supervisory management of the business. N.O.Walker and G.V.Baxendale took the same role when they joined the board.

The formal vehicle of management was a weekly meeting of the directors. Until February 1907 the directors met weekly as a

33 Information from the late G.V.Baxendale, J.W.Baxendale ceased to attend board meetings after 26 June, 1907 and made only rare appearances at Directors' meetings. During 1908 he did not attend at all.

34 Board Minutes 14 Oct 1908 Pic 1/9; J.W.Baxendale opposed the terms of Pickfords' reconstruction as contrary to his interests. Minutes of General Meetings, 25 March, 1, 8, 15, 24 April and especially 13 May 1908 Pic 1/1.

35 For the purpose and cost of reconstruction, Board Minutes 16 Dec 1908 24 March, 28 April, 1909, Pic 1/9; Minutes General Meeting, 29 Dec. 1908 31 March, 15, 21, 22 April 1909 Pic 1/1 Minutes Directors' committee 7 June 1911 Pic 1/16.

36 They were actually referred to as managing directors but the title has been changed to avoid confusion with modern usage.

board but then reconstituted themselves as a managing committee and reserved board meetings, held irregularly as required, to purely formal business.³⁷ At each meeting a report was made on the current state of each aspect of the business together with the comparative position in earlier years. Week by week the same methodical survey was the main business of the meeting. Consequently the record of their meetings reflects the directors' primary concern with the mundane matters of everyday working; neat formulations of policy are absent. At times discussion descended into considerable detail. Discussion of advertising matters, for example, a subject of regular consideration, invariably extended beyond budgetary and general policy considerations to include the particular format, cost, location and length of placement of individual items. Pickfords' directors spent a considerable proportion of the time given over to the formal exercise of management on matters which appear of limited importance, matters which might advantageously have been dealt with by a managing director or by senior clerks invested with the necessary discretionary authority.

Except possibly for certain vague areas of responsibility, e.g. Walker for finance, the two Baxendales for supervision of the provincial agencies, there is no evidence that the directors' contributed any specialist knowledge to Pickfords or even concentrated in any particular aspect of the firm's business. As individuals the directors' management role appears as a general attention to business, in line with the customary terms of partnership. Indeed in many ways the transition from partnership

37 Board Minutes 13 Feb. 1907 Pic 1/8.

to limited company appears as a change of form only. At no point did Pickfords' directors observe any conventions which suggest they accepted the principle of collective responsibility to a superior body of shareholders or that their authority derived from anyone but themselves. There were no ex-directorate shareholdings,³⁸ so there was no separation between ownership and control; the managers were responsible only to themselves.

An informative comparison can be obtained by examining Pickfords' board-room procedures against those of Carter Paterson, the great rival.³⁹ Although, like Pickfords, the family element was still strong, Carter Paterson preserved a formal structure of management. A chairman and vice-chairman were elected annually. The chairman was also managing director and in this capacity he sought the authority of his board for proposed actions and reported back on the results. Special committees were appointed whose recommendations were presented to the board for discussion. Authority was taken to subsist in the board as a group, from which individual directors drew their powers. Supreme authority lay with the shareholders to whom the director presented an annual account of their stewardship. No doubt the existence of significant ex-directorate shareholdings⁴⁰ underlies the preservation of these formal conventions, but by observing the principle of accountability to the shareholders, however nominal in practice, Carter Paterson's directors both followed the forms of a limited company more strictly than Pickfords and left a far more informative historical record. By contrast Pickfords'

38 Except for seven shares held by seven members of the family and firm, Board Minutes 26 March 1901 Pic 1/2.

39 The following is based on a general reading of the Carter Paterson records.

40 See the distribution of preference stock in the re-formed Carter Paterson, Schedule 2 to Application and nomination by Pickfords Limited, 3 Dec 1912 CP 2/19. This distribution was based on previous holdings in the two companies.

directors proceeded in a much more informal manner. Shareholders' meetings were perfunctory and the boardroom procedures of Carter Paterson totally absent. The reported actions of individual directors, an agency closed or a small business bought, suggest the exercise of autonomous authority more consistent with the form of partnership. This might well be a false impression, due to the nature of the record. If such actions represent decisions reached outside of the directors' meeting then the informality of Pickfords would only be heightened.

Only on rare occasions does the record contain an explanation, even an observation, from the directors on their purposes and actions. The essential task, therefore, is to make explicit what in the record is only implicit. This is particularly so when searching to discover the criteria of efficiency adopted by the directors. Each week Pickfords' statistics office served up to the directors a whole battery of cost and revenue figures for each part of the business, broken down per horse or per man according to the appropriate unit. Over a run of weeks and years these provided a useful comparative framework for reference. Marked deviations from past trends could be quickly picked out and, in the absence of known price changes, an explanation sought.

The operating ratio to which Pickfords' directors were particularly sensitive (both for the total concern and its constituent parts) was the ratio of salaries and wages to earnings⁴¹. In Pickfords' position this was an informative ratio to use. Wages and salaries were the heaviest single charge on revenue averaging about 40 per cent of total expenditure. The size

41 Minutes Directors' committee, June, July 1907 Pic 1/13; Ibid, 21 Feb, 1912 Pic 1/17.

of the wages bill was, therefore, a major determinant of the level of profit. This explains the directors' alarm when on one occasion, expenditure on this account at Pickfords' wharf reached 48 per cent of revenue. The manager was urgently summoned for an explanation and left in no doubt that savings might well start with his salary.⁴² Provender was the other major variable, accounting for a further 20 per cent of total costs.

When the wages/earnings ratio came under strain, efforts were made to meet it from both sides. A special canvass for traffic would be held in an attempt to increase revenue, but as the main pressure invariably came from the side of costs it was there that the main corrective measures were applied. The level of provender costs was largely determined by market conditions but the level of labour costs was subject to a certain degree of control. By a crude form of labour management, replacing men with boys, cheaper labour could be substituted for more expensive labour and thus total costs cut. In the circumstances this was an economically sound, if socially damaging, way of meeting rising costs.

Although the directors alone made decisions, at times the opinion of senior staff was sought in matters where their experience was felt to be particularly relevant.⁴³ The lines of communication between the directors and the staff were clearly laid down. All depot managers were answerable to the board. Administrative work at Gresham Street, the head office, was broken down into a defined departmental structure.⁴⁴ A senior clerk

42 Minutes Directors' committee 14 Aug, 1907 Pic 1/3.

43 Board Minutes, 27 Nov., 11 Dec. 1901 Pic 1/2. Minutes Directors' committee 8, 15, May 1912 Pic 1/17.

44 Recorded on two occasions, Board Minutes 23 April 1902 Pic 1/2; Minutes Directors' committee 26 Aug, 1908 Pic 1/14.

headed each department and was responsible to the board for the management of his section. He was expected to be on top of his work and show an example to the office staff by his prompt arrival for work and his assiduity in carrying it out. Slackness could bring stinging rebukes from which the most senior staff were not immune.⁴⁵ There was a danger of slipping into peremptory reprimands which might be resented, especially when they were felt to be unjustly administered. Efficiency and smartness were insisted on from all the staff. Emphasis was placed on polite and prompt attention to customers, especially where claims and complaints were concerned.⁴⁶ For certain offences, including intoxication, disobedience or negligence, Pickfords reserved the right of instant dismissal - the sentence handed out to the firm's vet "owing to the state in which appeared in a horse case at the Highgate Police Court."⁴⁷

In return for loyal service Pickfords offered favourable conditions of employment.⁴⁸ Wages were possibly higher than in comparable firms and increases were not begrudged, even when money was tight, when it was felt they had been genuinely earned. Manual as well as clerical staff were employed on a regular basis, and perhaps enjoyed greater security than in comparable branches of the transport industry. Downgrading to the 'odd' or casual basis was, however, used as a disciplinary measure or as a means of laying-off staff during a strike. Both the manual and clerical staff received a week's paid holiday after twelve months

45 Board Minutes, 8 Feb. 1905 Pic 1/6.

46 Memo Book, 1906-1913, containing notices addressed to staff Pic 4/10; also, General rules and regulations to be observed by all persons in the service of Pickfords Ltd. Pic 19/1.

47 Minutes Directors' committee, 9 Dec 1908 Pic 1/14

48 The following is based on the records generally.

with the firm. Self-help was encouraged by the continuation of the old practice whereby the firm contributed to the Clerks' Provident Fund a sum equal to the annual subscriptions and allowed the balance to be invested in the firm. The welfare of elderly and former employees also received attention. The cost of medical care was often paid, or half-wages allowed, and convalescence might be arranged at St. Andrew's House, Greenham, near Newbury, which was maintained by the Baxendales.⁴⁹ Senior clerical staff received pensions in proportion to their salary and length of service. Ex-gratia pensions were also paid to carmen who had been with Pickfords for 25 years or more. A pension of 7/6d per week was the maximum allowed; more generally it was 5/- per week, the level set by the National Insurance Act of 1908.

A hint of paternalism, tinged with autocracy, suggested by the foregoing is given more substance by the attitude displayed towards the activities of organised labour. As part of the transport industry in general, and associated with the railways and docks in particular, Pickfords could not avoid being affected by the industrial strife of the pre-war years.⁵⁰ Pickfords apparently escaped trouble in 1908 when conditions first seriously deteriorated - a situation which drew from one of the trade journals the plaintive cry that it was "high time that businessmen found a permanent solution to the difficulties constantly arising between capital and labour."⁵¹ Unfortunately the conflict was to rise to a higher level of intensity in 1911 and 1912, which embroiled the transport workers in particular. Pickfords had

49 A feature on the Home in The Window Card, No. 1 Oct. 1927 said that it was then equipped and maintained by L.H.Baxendale personally.

50 E.H.Phelps Brown The growth of British industrial relations (1950) esp. Chap. VI; H. Pelling, A history of British Trade Unionism (1963) p 133 ff; H.A.Clegg, A.Fox and A.F.Thompson A history of British trade unions since 1889 Vol. 1 1889-1910 (Oxford 1964) esp. Chap.11. A.Bullock The life and times of Ernest Bevin Vol. I (1960) pp 16 ff.

51 World's Carriers 15 Dec 1908 p 49.

to deal with strikes in both of these years in support of the two common demands, higher wages and the employment of men instead of boys.⁵²

The directors' attitude to unions and strikes was equivocal. They did not take an extreme view and refuse to negotiate with the men's representatives. The indications are that not many of Pickfords' men belonged to the local carmen's unions. The decision of the London men to form a separate union, paralleled elsewhere, the Amalgamated Society of Pickfords' Employees, seems to have been welcomed by the directors.⁵³ But their reaction to strike action, or the threat thereof, was a complex mixture of benevolence, repression and plain vindictiveness. In June 1912 Pickfords became involved in the dock strike at Bristol, Plymouth and elsewhere. At Bristol Pickfords joined with the other master carmen in issuing a summons against the strikers but decided to recompense its own men for part of their lost wages because they had remained at work for as long as they possibly could.⁵⁴ Almost in the same breath, however, action was taken against packer Woods of Plymouth, 44 years in the company's service and 67 years of age. He was to be informed that he could no longer be permanently employed, thus losing his weekly wage of 26/-d, far above his potential earnings elsewhere, because he had gone on strike with the other men "when there was not the least occasion for him to do so."⁵⁵ It is difficult to imagine a man of advanced age putting such a wage at risk unless subject to some form of pressure but such consideration was not raised. Other steps

52 Minutes Directors' committee 26 July 1911 Pic 1/16.

53 Ibid 12 June, 3 July 1912 Pic 1/17

54 Ibid 19 June 1912 Pic 1/17

55 Ibid 19 June 1912 Pic 1/17

taken in the face of strike action included the immediate withdrawal of bonus payments, the withdrawal of paid holidays, and the attempted black-listing of men who left.⁵⁶ On the whole Pickfords' management was less than progressive in its attitude to organised labour but shows up well in the more traditional form of staff welfare.

In the case of labour troubles the soundness of the directors response is not a factor of major importance. In the given situation the position adopted by an individual firm was not likely to affect the outcome to any significant extent. There were situations, however, where the opportuneness of judgement displayed by the directors would materially influence the whole shape of Pickfords' future. Chief among these was Pickfords' association, as cartage agent, with the LNWR, and especially the decision to terminate the contract. There can be no doubt that Pickfords derived substantial revenue from this connection, although no precise valuation can be placed on it. On the basis of tonnage payments made to the various railway companies, the only indicator available, Pickfords agency traffic represented about two-thirds of its total railway traffic at the turn of the century.⁵⁷ As sole agents to the LNWR Pickfords had access to a large volume of business on which the profit realised was possibly in the region of £20,000 per annum.⁵⁸ A secure income of this size must have been a valuable asset in the face of rising competition.

56 Ibid, 26 July, 18 Oct. 1911 Pic 1/16.

57 See the accompanying graph. The figures are extracted from the London Office Journal Pic 4/5.

58 Letter from E.G.C. Beckwith, the son of E.H. Beckwith who was head of Pickfords' rail traffic department, dated 21 May 1961: this letter quotes from a letter written to him some twenty years previously by his father's brother which included comments on the LNWR affair and cites this profit figure. Pic HH, Baxendale: Personal and General. In Pickfords' court action against the LNWR, £20,000 was given as the total loss to the firm if the LNWR continued the policies of which Pickfords was complaining.

The value to Pickfords of its tie with the LNWR is obvious. However the benefit was not solely one way. Even at the end of the nineteenth century many firms still regarded Pickfords as their carrier and consigned 'by Pickford' rather than 'by railway' or a particular railway company.⁵⁹ Pickfords not only brought traffic to the LNWR but it also absorbed the bulk of the clerical cost of processing traffic which had grown out of all proportion to the absolute growth of traffic because of the changed composition of railway freight.⁶⁰ Pickfords services, therefore, remained of value to the LNWR and although the railway company was expanding its own cartage facilities by the 1890s, it showed no desire to end Pickfords' favoured position.⁶¹

However by 1901 there were feelings of dissension on Pickfords' side.⁶² Restrictions on the firm's activities, e.g. the obligation to bring all traffic to the railway company and refrain from any form of competition, which force of circumstance had previously made necessary were evidently no longer regarded as acceptable. In addition the cartage rate allowed by the LNWR was felt to be unsufficiently remunerative. In January 1901 Pickfords informed the directors of the LNWR of its intention to terminate the agency agreement at the end of the following June.⁶³ Although they believed Pickfords' main aim was to break its tie with the company rather than bargain for better terms, the directors tried to negotiate a compromise. However no agreement could be reached and the break accordingly went ahead. The LNWR promptly acquired 500 horses and some 200 waggons, canvassed

59 Railway Magazine Vol. 1 (1897) p 194, interview with Mr. F. Harrison, general manager of the LNWR.

60 Pratt Railways and their rates p 90 ff.

61 Minutes cartage and agency committee 1885-1891, LNW 1/573

62 Cuttings from various journals, Pic 4/25 pp 31-33, Board Minutes, 27 Nov, 1901 Pic 1/2.

63 Minutes, goods traffic committee 16 Jan, 13 March, 17 April, 1901, LNW 1/201; 15 May, 19 June, 17 July, 7 Aug 1901 LNW 1/202.

Pickfords' customers, and successfully held the bulk of its traffic when the new terms of working came into effect.

The termination of the agency agreement was the personal decision of either or both of the two director managers, L.H. Baxendale and F.H.Baxendale, against the views of their senior staff, and probably their chairman and major shareholder, J.W. Baxendale.⁶⁴ The fact of the staff's opposition is important since it means that an assessment of this decision as fundamentally misconceived is not based solely on ex-post considerations. The evidence of the resultant effects allows of no other conclusion. The effect on Pickfords' business with the LNWR is shown, in terms of tonnage payments, by the accompanying graph. The contract ended on 30th June 1901; business for the quarter ending that day totalled £78,000 of which a little over half, £37,320 was paid to the LNWR. By the end of the next quarter the total had fallen by about an eighth but the LNWR's share had fallen to about a third. In July alone the agencies whose main work was LNWR traffic made a loss of £2,155, an annual rate of £25,000.⁶⁵ By the autumn Pickfords' railway earnings were reported to be down by a third.

Pickfords thus experienced an immediate sharp reduction in traffic with the LNWR, followed by a steady downward slide. Table 11.2 illustrates this in terms of tonnage weight conveyed. Pickfords' tonnage payments to the LNWR, as shown in the graph,

64 According to the letter of E.G.C. Beckwith, cited above, L.H. Baxendale was responsible, and E.H.Beckwith and other staff opposed the move. The late Guy Baxendale stated that the change was advocated chiefly by his father, F.H.Baxendale and that the disastrous results lay behind the quarrel with J.W. Baxendale.

65 Board Minutes 2 Oct. 1901 Pic 1/2.

PICKFORDS' RAILWAY TONNAGE PAYMENTS

DECEMBER 1889, QUARTERLY, TO DECEMBER 1912.

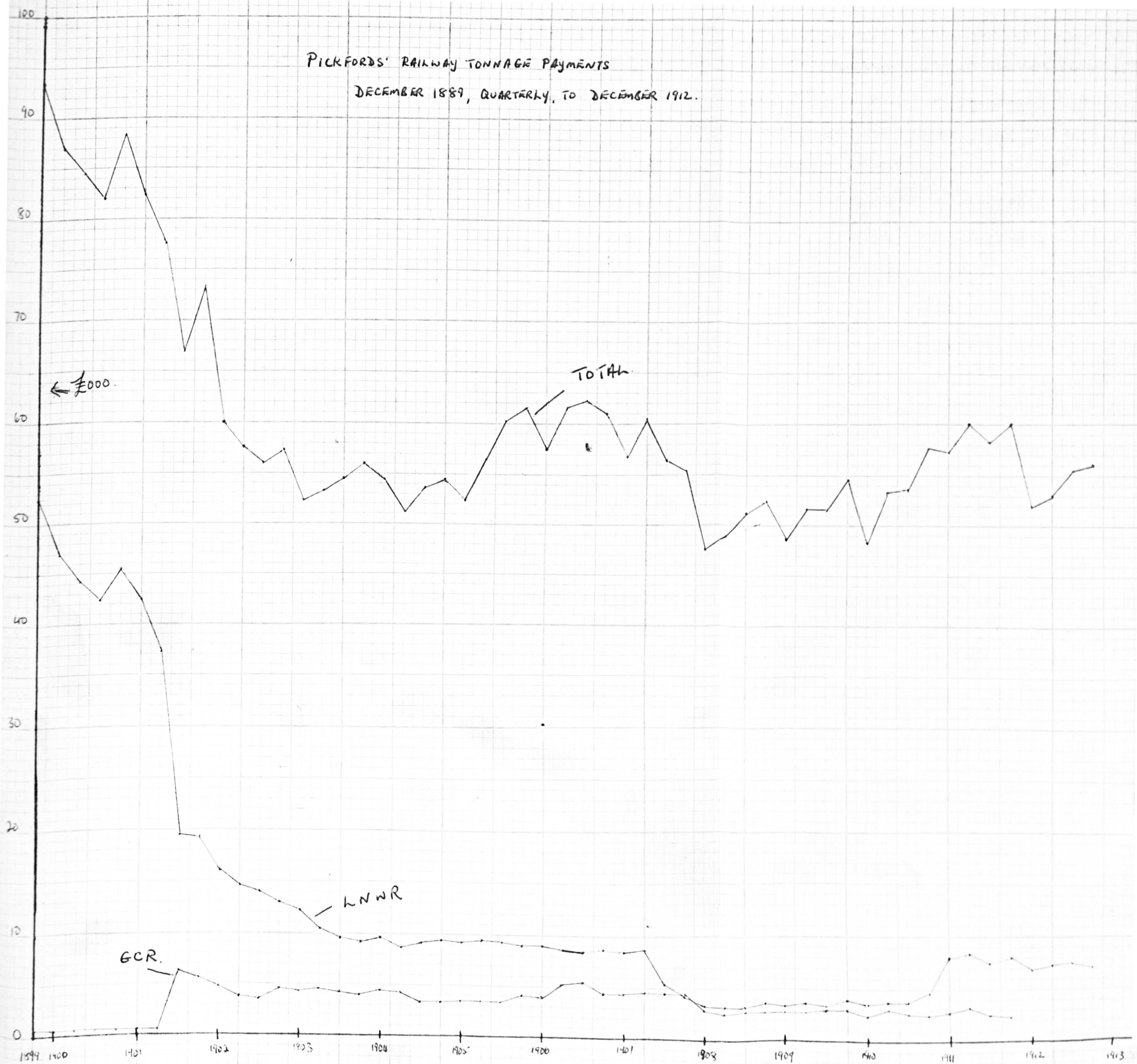


Table 11.2. Pickfords traffic on the LNWR 1901-1905 (tons)

	<u>London</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Total</u>
1901			
June $\frac{1}{2}$ year estimated ¹			166,600
December $\frac{1}{2}$ year	16,699	63,614	80,313
Estimated whole year			246,900
1902	25,253	88,393	113,646
1903	19,439	61,619	81,058
1904	16,709	54,877	71,586
1905	14,582	53,329	67,911

Source Evidence of E.H.Beckwith, Pickfords Ltd. v.
LNWR Jan. 1907 Pic 4/15.

Note 1. The tonnage figure for June half year 1901 has been estimated by calculating the ratio between the known tonnage figure and tonnage payment for the December half year and applying this to the known tonnage payment for the June half year.

contracted in similar proportion over the same period. Both series show that by 1905 Pickfords' business with the LNWR had fallen to about 25 per cent of its level in June 1901. It then temporarily stabilised at that level. Table 11.2 also shows how much the flow of traffic was from the provinces to London and explains why agencies in the north and midlands dealing almost exclusively with LNWR traffic quickly ran into difficulties. Several of them were already marginal and now had to be closed.

The loss of LNWR traffic could not have been unexpected, possibly even some net reduction anticipated. In general the hope would have been that Pickfords would hold the bulk of its traffic and transfer it to the Great Central railway company (GCR) with which an agency agreement had been concluded.⁶⁷ The link with the GCR undoubtedly throws light on the timing of Pickfords' action. Only in 1899 was St. Pancras station opened, the step by which the GCR achieved its long standing ambition of having a London terminus, and thus broke the LNWR's monopoly of traffic between London, the midlands, and the north. An agency contract was also signed with the Lancashire & Yorkshire railway company (LYR)⁶⁸ but the main hopes rested on the new association with the GCR. Unfortunately for Pickfords, the GCR failed to mount serious competition to the LNWR's position. Its line was poorly located to generate much independent traffic and it was largely unsuccessful in attracting traffic off other lines. In addition to this, the LNWR canvassed for Pickfords' traffic and also as the premier railway company was in a position to exert an influence on other railway companies. In the first twelve

67 Ibid 24 June 1901

68 Ibid 14 Aug. 1901

months of the new arrangements Pickfords created 'new' business with the GCR and the LYR to the extent of £27,500, but 'lost' £97,000 worth of business with the LNWR, a new reduction of £70,000. The effects of breaking with the LNWR had not been off-set. In fact despite the break Pickfords continued, for most of the succeeding period, to conduct more business with the LNWR than with the GCR. Only for one quarter, December 1907, did Pickfords account with the GCR exceed that with the LNWR, and then only by the barest margin. Similarly, use of the LYR was by way of a temporary boost only and had already fallen back before the railway company terminated the contract in 1906.⁶⁹ All in all Pickfords had not come out of the changes very well.

In an effort to halt the slide Pickfords took to the courts once more.⁷⁰ The technicalities of the case, which came to a decisive issue in January 1907, centred on the controversial question of whether a railway company should be compelled to quote as separate components of its charge the cost of conveyance station to station and the cost of collection and delivery.⁷¹ The general practice was for the company to make a comprehensive charge and then allow a rebate to any customer performing his own collection and delivery. In previous actions before the Railway and Canal Commission⁷² the LNWR had been ordered to supply Pickfords with a breakdown of its charges and, after losing its appeal, the company had complied. Pickfords' case now was to argue that the rebate allowed was less than the cost of collection and delivery when performed by the railway company i.e. the company

69 Board Minutes 7 March, 18, 25 April 1906, Pic 1/7.

70 Pickford Ltd. v. LNWR in the court of the Railway and Canal Commissioners, Jan. to May 1907 Pic 4/15.

71 Ibid evidence Mr. Maxwell Stevens; evidence of Mr. B. Howell, R.C. on canals and waterways (1906-1909) Vol V part 2 [Cd 4840] 1909 QQ 41119-41152; for the general background see Dyos and Aldcroft British transport pp 165-172.

72 World's Carriers, Vol 1 (1905) p 137, p 191 ff.

allowed itself more than it allowed its competitors and thereby unduly, and illegally, preferred itself. The further details of the case are not important. Pickfords' basic purpose was to try to show that it had been discriminated against by the LNWR to the extent of seriously depressing its revenue. The aim was to secure a higher rate of rebate. Pickfords' action was taken up vigorously by the motor press⁷³ but enthusiastic cheering from the side lines, even disgust at the outcome, was no compensation for losing the case. The decline in Pickfords' earnings was not denied but the judges maintained that it had not been proved to be the direct result of the railway company's action, exclusive of other possible influences. Pickfords appealed but again lost the verdict. As a direct consequence the agencies at Leeds, Huddersfield and Bradford were closed in addition to those already shut at Dudley, Derby and Smethwick.⁷⁴ Pickfords' use of the LNWR declined even further and total tonnage payments showed a similar slide. Eventually, however, old differences were patched up. In the autumn of 1910 terms were arranged for a new agency agreement which was commenced the following January and resulted in a modest recovery of Pickfords' railway business.⁷⁵

Almost from the time Pickfords broke with the LNWR efforts were made to find new sources of revenue. Rail traffic in the south east and from London to the south coast generally was one area where expansion was hoped for.⁷⁶ The evidence of tonnage

- 73 Commercial Motor, Vol. 5 (1907) p 286 ff; Vol. 6 (1907-8) pp 449-50; World's Carriers, Vol. 3 (1907) Feb., July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Dec., issues
- 74 Minutes Directors' committee 4, 11 Dec. 1907 Pic 1/14.
- 75 Ibid 3, 10, Aug., 30 Nov., 1910, 4 Jan. 1911 Pic 1/16.
- 76 Board Minutes 18 Dec. 1901 Pic 1/2.

payments does not indicate any noticeable expansion on this account, although between 1902 and 1906 Pickfords opened a number of new agencies in the area, including ones at Reigate, Redhill, Staines, Epsom and Worthing.

The cartage of passengers' advance luggage to Victoria and other London stations was a new outlet.⁷⁷ Pickfords received commission on this business, as indeed it did on the sale of tickets for railway and steamship companies, a quite new departure for Pickfords, which was built up with considerable vigour.⁷⁸ Agreements were made with the major shipping companies and with both overseas and domestic railway companies. From this position it was a small step to a direct interest in holiday travel. By the beginning of 1908 the development of Pickfords' tourist interests was an important object of policy.⁷⁹ Indeed by then Pickfords already had several ventures to its credit, including tours to Norway, Hungary and the lands of the Nile river.⁸⁰ One particularly intriguing project was that of voyages by balloon at a charge of £25 for four persons - and at the customer's entire risk.⁸¹ From such beginnings Pickfords travel department, now Pickfords Travel Limited, emerged. Finally Pickfords initiated the sale of poster space on its delivery vans, a lead which other firms quickly followed.⁸²

All of these points have their interest but the main consideration lies in whether they contributed additional revenue. The sale of advertising space was certainly successful. Net income rose from about £2,000 per annum in 1907 to £4,250 in 1911, and was a considerable value. It is difficult to assess

77 Ibid, 14 Jan, 25 Feb., 18 March 1903 Pic 1/3; 26 Aug 1903 Pic 1/4.

78 Especially 1904-1905

79 Minutes Directors' committee, 22 June 1908 Pic 1/14.

80 Board Minutes, 21 March, 27 June, 29 Sept. 1906 Pic 1/7; 7, 14 Nov. 1906 Pic 1/8; Minutes Directors' committee 5 June 1907 Pic 1/13; 5 Feb 1908 Pic 1/14; The Times, 30 May 1907

81 Minutes Directors committee 29 May 1907 Pic 1/13.

82 Ibid 11 March 1908 Pic 1/14.

the contribution of the ticket and tourist side in the absence of proper figures. Pickfords' stock of tickets had to be guaranteed by its deposit with the various companies of investment security to the value of the stock held. It is indicative that the premises at 37 Sloane Street, which Pickfords took especially for its ticket sales, were abandoned after a few years. Running expenses were found to be heavy, and generally in excess of earnings.⁸³

Pickfords' interests in tourism and travel were developments whose main significance still lay in the future. Among innovations of immediate consequence, the introduction of motor transport was of primary importance. The potential contribution of steam power to road transport was held back for most of the nineteenth century by the repressive attitude displayed in the 1820s and 1830s.⁸⁴ By the later years of the century, however, a number of firms, like Burrells and Tasker, specialised in the manufacture of 'road locomotives.' Technical advance was not absent. F.J.Burrell patented a system of spring mountings which allowed the wheels to rise and fall with the contours of the road surface without the boiler rolling at all.⁸⁵ In general however, the commercial application of motors to road haulage was impossible until the existing legal constraints were removed.

Things began to change with the Locomotives and Highways Acts of 1896.⁸⁶ The raising of the speed limit for light locomotives from 4 to 12 mph provided the conditions within which the private motor industry could develop. The Daimler and

83 Ibid 19 Feb 1908 Pic 1/14.

84 W.T.Jackman Transportation in modern England pp 328-335

85 World's Carriers, Vol. 2 (1906) p 90; also C.Singer et al (eds) A history of technology Vol. V (Oxford 1958) pp 425-6.

86 C.I.Savage, An economic history of transport (1959) p 93 ff; Dyos and Aldcroft, British transport chap. 12.

Lanchester companies both began production in Britain in that year and speculative finance was also attracted.⁸⁷ The private motor industry was given a secure basis by the Motor Car Act of 1903 which recognised the 'motor car' as being distinct from the 'light locomotive', raised its speed limit to 20 mph and established the conditions for its general use. The application of motors for commercial purposes was, however, still difficult. A 'light locomotive' was defined as having a tare or unladen weight of less than three tons, which proved to be too low a limit within which a reliable vehicle could be produced. The practice of putting a van body on a motor car chassis proved highly unsatisfactory.⁸⁸ Not until the Heavy Motor Car Order, 1904, which raised the tare limit to five tons, did the commercial motor industry, with purpose built vehicles, begin to emerge.

In December, 1902 Pickfords' directors discussed the possibility of using steam traction over long distances, say between London and Birmingham. Estimates were made, in consultation with Thorneycrofts, of costs per ton mile and the likely availability of traffic, but it was eventually decided that the existing speed limit rendered any such scheme impracticable.⁸⁹ The following September, however, two light traction engines were ordered from Wallis & Stevens of Basingstoke, followed by an order for twenty more two months later.⁹⁰ These vehicles, capable of hauling a trailer with a five to eight ton load, were a scaled-down version of the bigger model, specially developed by Wallis & Stevens to meet the specifications for 'light

87 S.B.Saul 'The motor industry in Britain to 1914', Business History, Vol. 5 (1962-3) p 22; also E.L.Cornwell Commercial Vehicles (N.D. ? 1963)

88 Commercial Motor Vol. 1 (1905) p 306

89 Board Minutes, 3, 10, 17 Dec. 1902 Pic 1/3.

90 Board Minutes, 2 Sept. 11 Nov., 1903 Pic 1/4

locomotives.' From this first purchase Pickfords steadily extended its use of motors. Steam lorries were soon preferred to traction engines, largely because they could carry a load on their platform as well as haul a trailer, but petrol vehicles were initially regarded with some distrust, in part because of high fire risk.⁹¹

By 1906 motor transport was firmly established with Pickfords. The directors decided that year to form a small limited company with the registered business name 'The Motor Cartage and Carrying Company'. in order to provide for anticipated future trade.⁹² A more decisive step came in 1908 when Pickfords bought up a firm which had gone into liquidation, 'The Motor Delivery Company', presumably one of the many short-lived concerns which tried to find a place in the contract hire business.⁹³ Pickfords retained it as a separate contract company but two years later all Pickfords' motor business, including that of the subsidiary company, was merged into a single motor department.⁹⁴ At the same time a garage was opened at Hackford Road, Brixton, for servicing the motor fleet.⁹⁵ 1910 was thus a decisive year in Pickfords' adoption of motors, as it was for the adoption of commercial goods vehicles in general.

91 Commercial Motor Vol. 1 (1905) supplement to issue number 1, p 10.

92 Board Minutes, 25 April, 2, 16 May 1906 Pic 1/7.

93 Minutes Directors' committee, 29 July 1908 Pic 1/14; Commercial Motor Vol. 8 (1908-9) p 109.

94 Minutes Directors' committee 31 Aug, 1910 Pic 1/16; Commercial Motor, Vol. 12 (1910-1911) p 56, p 94.

95 Minutes Directors' committee, 22 June, 1910 Pic 1/16; The Driving Mirror, Winter 1946/7, p 4.

Table 11.3. Goods Vehicles in use 1904 to 1914

	<u>Vehicles in use</u>	<u>Increase</u>
March 1904	4,000	
1905	9,000	5,000
1906	12,000	3,000
1907	14,000	2,000
1908	18,000	4,000
1909	22,000	4,000
1910	30,000	8,000
1911	40,000	10,000
1912	52,600	12,600
1913	63,000	11,000
1914	82,000	18,400

Source: British Road Federation
Basic Road Statistics 1969 (1969) p 3.

No historical study has yet been made of the commercial motor industry, so a discussion of Pickfords' adoption of motor transport has to proceed without the benefit of comparative experience.⁹⁶ However some comment can be made on the basis of Pickfords' records, on the state of the industry in these years. The general impression conveyed is very much that of an industry in its primitive and uncertain stages. For example Pickfords' order to Wallis & Stevens for twenty small traction engines was accompanied by the provision, agreed by the manufacturers, that similar vehicles would not be supplied to any of Pickfords' competitors for eighteen months.⁹⁷ The size of the order was doubtless a chief reason why Wallis & Stevens was willing to accept such a condition. Since the total output of all manufacturers of steam vehicles was only twenty-five per week in 1907,⁹⁸ such an order four years previously probably represented several months work to a single firm. In addition this was an unduly large order for Pickfords to place; purchases were usually made

96 General comments on the industry are based on a limited reading of some of the motor journals, especially Commercial Motor and World's Carriers

97 Board Minutes, 11 Nov. 1902 Pic 1/3.

98 Commercial Motor, Vol. 5 (1907) p 455

in lots of half a dozen or less. Since orders were placed with several firms, Pickfords were presumably obliged to carry a large stock of spare parts. Although uneconomic in an accounting sense, operational experience of competing versions of a new and still developing technology no doubt had its value. The acceptance by a manufacturer of obsolete vehicles in part exchange was one factor taken account of when new orders were being placed.⁹⁹ Not that Pickfords necessarily sought the cheapest money cost. Previous good experience, for example, clinched a new order for Hindleys even though that firm's quotation was the second most expensive of six and exceeded the cheapest by almost £90 per vehicle.¹⁰⁰

Although vehicles were fairly soon built in a standard range of tare-weights, a completely standard product built for and sold from stock did not appear for some time. Market conditions do not seem to have supported such a position much before about 1910. Not all firms made purchases in such small lots as Pickfords but it is likely that for some years at least the procurement of a steady flow of orders was one of the manufacturers' main tasks. As the manufacturer probably held the weaker position in the producer-customer relationship, the end product was likely to incorporate a certain degree of individual customer preference. The manufacturer's role did not end with the completion of a sale. Apart from the provision of finance in the form of hire-purchase agreements,¹⁰¹ manufacturers offered customers post-sales services in the form of training facilities for their drivers¹⁰² or

99 Minutes Directors' committee 8 April, 6 Nov. 1908 Pic 1/14; 13 July 1910 Pic 1/16.

100 Ibid 23 Oct, 1907 Pic 1/13.

101 Commercial Motor Vol. 6 (1907-8) p 398.

102 Ibid Vol 4 (1906-7) p 29.

contracts of three to five years to maintain the purchased vehicle in running order.¹⁰³

A simple model of the innovation of a new mode of transportation, proposes a limited initial breakthrough in defined areas, by virtue of superior operating costs, followed by a period of general diffusion as its competitive power against existing modes steadily increases.¹⁰⁴ Finally, the cost reduction of the new mode, after further technical advance, business convenience and possibly the superior power of a new interest group all combined to promote its adoption for the majority of purposes and the reduction of its predecessor to the role of ancilliary. The phasing of Pickfords' adoption of motors broadly fits this formulation, although less neatly than in the case of the transition from canal to rail transport. The advance of motors was less strikingly decisive than that of railways. For the large volume of traffic incorporated in town delivery work, horse transport reigned supreme for many years to come. Although motor transport soon attracted its own interest group, its adoption was determined chiefly by proved technical capacity. Motor transport had to make its way in the face of a good deal of opposition, especially from local authorities. Threatened or actual prosecutions for damage to roads and bridges, or creation of smoke nuisance, were some of the early hazards to be overcome.¹⁰⁵ As late as 1911 Pickfords were threatened with a perpetual injunction by the town clerk of Kensington because of the annoyance

103 Minutes Directors' committee 15 July 1908, Pic 1/14; Commercial Motor, Vol. 6 (1907-8) p 258

104 As posed by L. Girard in M.M. Postan and C.Wilson (eds) Cambridge economic history of Europe Vol. VI (O.U.P.1965) pt. 1 pp 212-214, and systematised by S.G. Checkland 'The economic evaluation of the modern world: a review article' Business History Review, Vol. XL (1966) pp 355-68.

105 Board Minutes 19 April 1905 noted the fifth summons for smoke nuisance; 10 May 1905 Pic 1/ 6; Minutes Directors' committee 6, 13 Jan, 1909 Pic 1/14.

and damage caused by heavy traction engines passing through the borough. Similar action had been taken successfully against two other firms. Pickfords chose the path of compromise and diverted the offending vehicles.¹⁰⁶

For motors to be of practical value to Pickfords they had to be able to work more cheaply and at least as efficiently as horses. A motor vehicle could cover a much greater mileage than a horse and could convey larger loads. Because of its higher work rate the motor had a higher earnings rate. But both its capital cost and working costs were considerably higher. So for a motor vehicle to be used profitably it had to be employed to its full potential. Only where the work of several horses could be transferred could the necessary volume and regularity of work be made available to secure the maximum exploitation of the vehicle's potential. In Pickfords case some contract cartage work met these conditions¹⁰⁷ but for general purposes the main scope for their use was found in depot transfer work. Parcels were dispatched in bulk between the depots at regular intervals during the day, and then were sorted for subsequent delivery. Since a motor could do two round trips a day, two teams of horses, six or seven in all, could be taken off. By the end of 1904 motors were being used between City Basin, Pickfords' central parcels depot, and Brentford, Fulham and Kingston-upon-Thames. After the initial teething troubles of breakdowns and delayed schedules had been overcome, motors were brought into general use for this sort of work.¹⁰⁸

106 Ibid, 18, 25 Oct. 1 Nov. 1911 Pic 1/16.

107 Board Minutes, 28 Oct. 1903 Pic 1/4; Ibid 21 Feb, 1906 Pic 1/7.

108 Board Minutes 17 Aug, 1904 Pic 1/5; World's Carriers Vol. 1 (1904-5) pp 8-12; Commercial Motor Vol. I (1905) supplement to issue number 1 p 10.

Individually motors could handle more traffic than horses but the basic issue was whether, over a comparable volume of traffic, the motor vehicle could show a significantly higher margin of profit per unit of traffic conveyed. It is unlikely that charges could be increased on the strength of a speedier service. Indeed the force of competition exerted a persistent downward pressure on rates: no single firm was in a position to influence the market except in a downward direction by initiating a round of price-cutting.¹⁰⁹ A speedy motor service was a promotional advantage but within the existing rates structure. Thus average revenue per unit of traffic was probably declining and could be off-set only by increasing total volume. So, whether to meet competition or to maintain profit margins, it was on the side of costs that efforts had to be concentrated. Evidently depot transfer work provided the sort of conditions where the motor vehicle's cost effectiveness could be exploited. A quantitative assessment of the margin of the motor vehicle's economic advantage over horses in this work generally is impossible since the necessary figures do not exist. The only comparative cost figures which do exist are for July, 1908,¹¹⁰ some time after the transitional phase, and probably refer to one service only. The figures are

Horses	-	£2.15. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ d per day
Petrol motor	-	£2.11.11d per day
Steam motor	-	£2. 0. 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ d per day

The important figures are those for horses and steam motors since

- 109 Board Minutes, 22 June 1904 Pic 1/5 dispute with Suttons; Minutes Directors' committee, March-April 1908, dispute with Globe Parcels Express Pic 1/14; Ibid Oct. 1908, Carter Paterson and Beans Express undercutting Pickfords; Ibid 6 Jan. 1909 dispute with London Parcels Delivery Company.
- 110 Between Edmonton and City Basin, Ibid 24 June, 1 July 1908 Pic 1/14.

Pickfords did not use petrol vehicles for this purpose. On the basis of these figures steam motors, over a six day working week, carried a saving at a rate of £270 per annum. Once introduced there was never any suggestion of reverting to horses so perhaps these figures indicate the general trend.

Motors do not seem to have enjoyed a comparable economic advantage over horses in town delivery work, the other major area of their potential innovation. The above figures indicate that even in the favourable conditions of transfer work petrol vehicles, the type used for town deliveries, showed a relatively small comparative advantage over horses. Since town delivery work was characterised by fluctuating tonnages and periods of slack, under-utilisation of capacity was likely to erode this small margin. In addition delivery rounds were designed to meet the working limits of a horse so that only where several existing rounds could be combined could the necessary displacement ratio be achieved to allow the deployment of a motor. Even where technically these conditions were met, motors could not always perform the work as efficiently or cheaply as the horses they displaced. For example, in 1907, Pickfords experimented with a petrol motor in Brighton to cater for holiday luggage traffic but its running costs for the first six months worked out at twice the level of earnings it brought in. It probably never made very much profit the whole time it was there. When eventually horses were restored - and for prestige purposes this was delayed for some time, despite the loss, because Carter Paterson was making a similar, unsuccessful experiment - costs were so reduced that despite a drop in the volume of traffic a higher rate of profit was achieved.¹¹¹ In the London suburban area, where the bulk of

¹¹¹ Minutes Directors' committee 31 July, 14 Aug. 1907 Pic 1/13; 18 Dec. 1907 Pic 1/14; 13, 20, 27 July 1910, 19 July 1911 Pic 1/16.

town delivery work was centred, Pickfords made some use of petrol, vehicles, chiefly in the outer areas. The distance of a delivery round from the depot and the area to be covered were probably the features which led to the consideration of motors. A note in May 1912 showed that of five districts in which motors were being tried, the smallest was $2\frac{1}{2}$ square miles in area and the largest $9\frac{1}{2}$ square miles. The rounds worked by horses selected for comparison were each less than one square mile in area.¹¹² The latter are likely to have been more typical of Pickfords' delivery districts for which horses continued in general use.

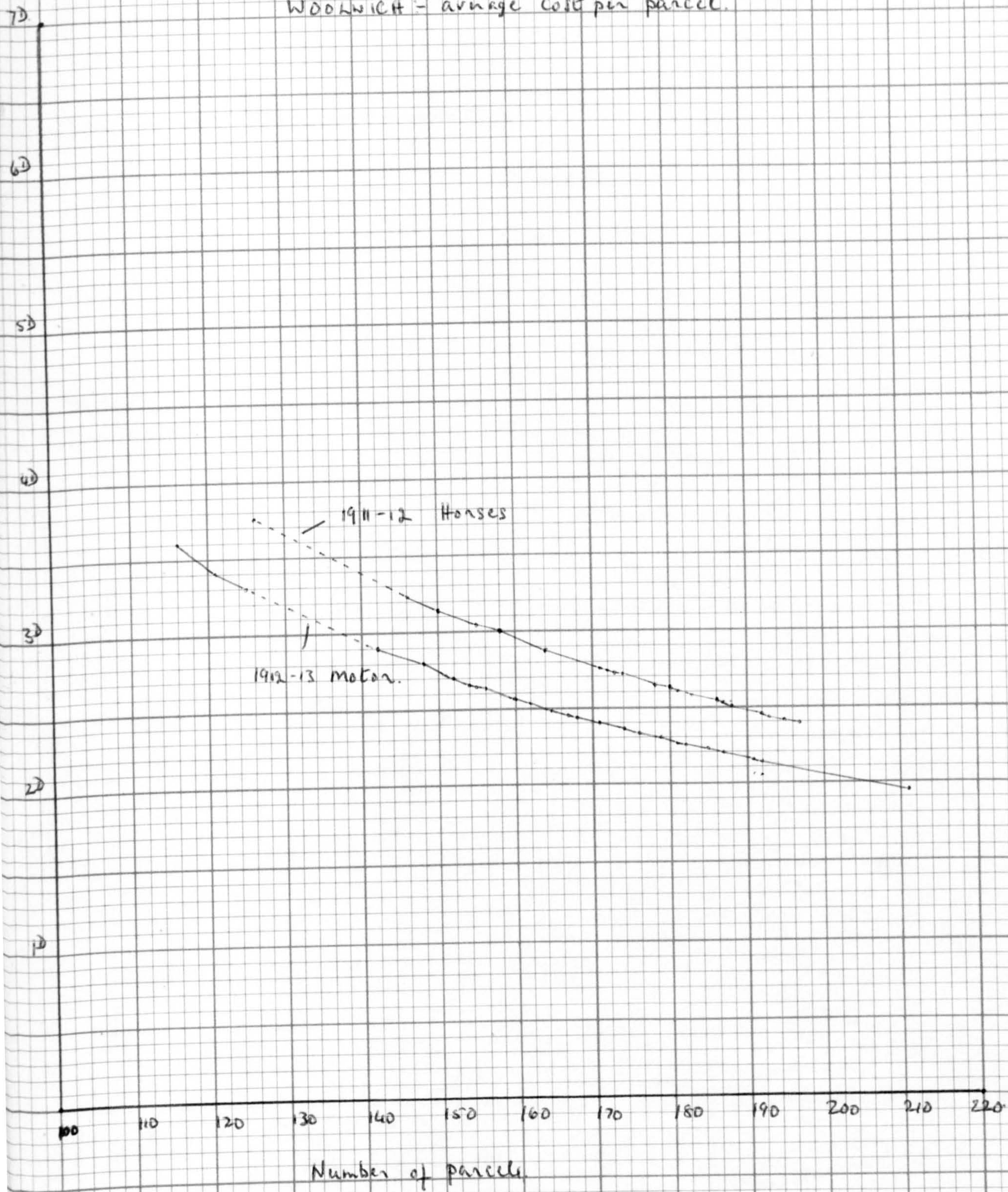
It is possible to analyse in a little detail Pickfords' innovation of petrol motors in two districts, at least in the form in which Pickfords assessed the difference in working.¹¹³ In February 1912 Pickfords introduced a motor, worked from Poplar, in the Woolwich and Plumstead districts and two months later another motor, worked from Walthamstow, to cover the Loughton, Woodford and Chigwell districts. Over the next nine months a weekly report was made of the number of parcels handled each day, the cost per package and the comparative figures for the preceeding year. It is difficult, for reasons explained below, to determine the value of these figures but since they were clearly intended to provide a meaningful comparison between the new and old system of working it seems legitimate to make use of them.

It is worth noting, as a preliminary, that although the work of seven horses was taken over in both cases, in the Walthamstow area it proved impossible to work the whole district with a single motor. Within a fortnight a horse van was put back on to cover

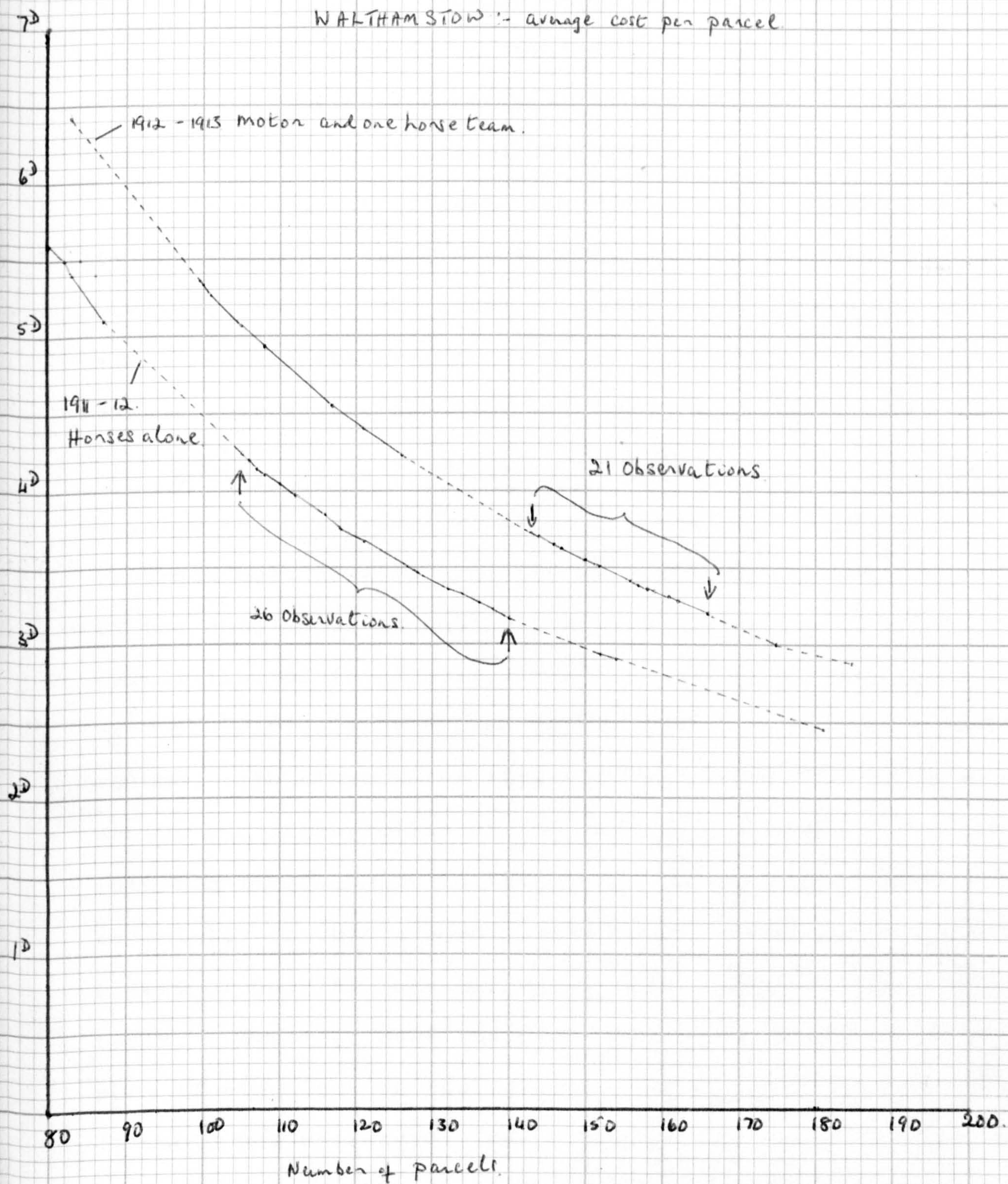
¹¹² Ibid 29 May 1912 Pic 1/17.

¹¹³ The following is based on data recorded in Minutes Directors' committee 3 April 1912 - 22 Jan 1913 Pic 1/17.

WOODKNIGHT - average cost per parcel.



WALTHAMSTOW :- average cost per parcel



Chigwell and the motor did the rest.¹¹⁴ There was no such problem with the other motor. The substantive point, however, is how far the introduction of motors reduced costs. From the data contained in the weekly reports, the curve of average cost per parcel has been drawn for both districts and for both systems of working. (See the accompanying graphs). In Woolwich and Plumstead the substitution of motor for horses resulted in a moderate reduction of costs but without any significant increase in the volume of traffic handled. In the Walthamstow case, however, although the average number of parcels conveyed rose significantly, the average cost per parcel of motor with horse was higher than for horses alone.

However it is difficult to attach more than a superficial meaning to these results, since further analysis suggests that the recorded unit cost figures are artificial. First, tabulation of the data shows an unlikely fineness of gradation. Secondly calculation of total cost, from cost per unit times quantity, produces virtually the same result except at the very lowest volume. In other words total cost is held constant over several months and irrespective of the volume of traffic. This seems rather unlikely. It is not known how the figures were calculated or what elements they comprise but they appear to be a form of internal accounting, a fixed charge taken as a working basis. Averaged over the daily volume of traffic this would show fluctuations in the rate of profit on the calculated cost; it would not necessarily show either true profit or true cost. The conclusion, therefore, is disappointingly negative, but has

114. Ibid 3, 10, 17 April 1912 Pic 1/17.

some value in illustrating the method of comparison Pickfords actually used.

The main consideration here is the replacement of horses by motors, but, at a time when the claims of steam-powered vehicles are being raised again, it is worth noting the rivalry between steam and petrol.¹¹⁵ Steam had much in its favour, especially in the form of the steam lorry. It was cheaper to buy and run, easier to drive and maintain. Engineers drew on their stock of skilled knowledge of steam power and quickly produced a simple, reliable and technologically mature road vehicle. The petrol vehicle was more expensive and did not reach technical maturity until much later, as Pickfords' ample experience of mechanical failures, especially of the brakes and gearing, illustrates only too well. But it did have the advantage of speed and on this factor was developed a certain specialisation of function between the two forms of motors - or as Pickfords advertised 'Petrol for speed: steam for heavy haulage.'¹¹⁶ Only in exceptional circumstances, could petrol compete with steam for heavy loads, as for example the 5 ton Commer lorry that Pickfords used in Sheffield because of its superior ability to cope with the hills.¹¹⁷ The speed advantage of petrol vehicles was reduced when rubber tyres were fitted to steam lorries thereby lowering, in terms of loading weights, the competitive threshold between the two. The balance was given a further tilt towards steam when tax on petrol was discovered to be a fruitful form of revenue. In 1911 one of the leading motor

115 Minutes Directors' committee, 8, 15 May 1913 Pic 1/17;
Commercial Motor passim

116 Minutes Directors' committee, 25 Oct. 1911 Pic 1/16.

117 Commercial Motor, Vol. 10 (1909-10) p 121.

journals, The Commercial Motor, ran a long series of articles showing how even at the 3½ ton level the rubber-tyred steamer could hold its ^{own} against petrol vehicles. Twelve months later the exercise was to show how, despite increased fuel prices, petrol could still compete with steam.

Pickfords found scope for both steam and petrol vehicles. It did not follow Carter Paterson's action in 1911 of switching over to petrol entirely, even for depot transfer work.¹¹⁸ Pickfords continued to believe that "with regard to motors for depot services at present there is apparently no useful alternative to steam."¹¹⁹ Carter Paterson's decision was no doubt prompted by the commencement in that year of a new service to the outer London suburbs like Watford, Romford, Woking and Staines, the beginning of that firm's 'Home Counties Express'¹²⁰ Pickfords followed some time later with its own version of what was essentially the same service, but less well named, the 'Outer Area Service.'¹²¹ Here petrol vehicles made a unique contribution to road transport for their speed was an essential precondition to covering such relatively long distances. By then Pickfords was increasingly looking to petrol vehicles for its future services. In May 1912 tenders were received from six firms for the supply of a hundred such vehicles,¹²² but even at the end of that year more than fifty per cent of a considerably expanded motor fleet were steam vehicles.¹²³

One effect of the introduction of motors was to increase the existing competition between the leading London carriers.

118 Minutes Directors' committee 3 May 1911 Pic 1/16.

119 Ibid 27 March 1912 Pic 1/17.

120 Board Minutes, 15 Feb. 1911; Directors' report to AGM 7 Sept. 1911 CP 1/2.

121 Begun 1 Feb. 1912 Minutes Directors' committee 24 Jan., 7 Feb 1912 Pic 1/17.

122 Ibid 27 March, 8 May 1912

123 Ibid, 15 Nov. 1911 Pic 1/17. - 39 motors (a net increase of 9 since the end of 1907) of which 26 were steam vehicles; World's Carriers Vol. 9 (1912-1913) p 7 - 62 motors of which at least 32 were steam vehicles.

Motors implied speedier services, a useful advertising feature with which to appeal to the public for their custom. In 1906 Pickfords and Carter Paterson were seen to be "running a neck and neck race...for, while we see the Express Motor delivery vans of the one company running in all directions, we see displayed on every van belonging to the other company particulars of the large number of motors they are now using."¹²⁴ That same year the directors of Carter Paterson drew their shareholders attention, for the second successive year, to the depressive effect on average revenue and carriages rates of the keen competition being experienced. Earlier in the year they had taken the step of registering two small subsidiary companies, 'The London & Provincial Motor Despatch Company Ltd.' and 'The London Motor Parcel Express Ltd.' in the hope of checking, if possible, "the enterprising spirit displayed by the promotion of Motor traction in the early part of the year".¹²⁵

Pickfords was always alert to the activities of its competitors, those of Carter Paterson in particular. The opening of a new agency, signs of superior results for similar traffic, the introduction of a new service, all such were carefully noted and their implications for Pickfords assessed. Indeed the whole range of business was sharply contested but none more so than the collection and delivery of parcels. Some parcels were brought to Pickfords depots and receiving offices but the major part were collected by the carmen on their daily rounds. Wholesale and retail houses received routine calls, shops and householders when a 'window card' was displayed. A 'window card' was a notice

¹²⁴ World's Carriers, Vol. 2 (1905-6) p 149.

¹²⁵ Directors' reports to AGM 15 Aug. 1906 CP 1/2.

in the name of Pickfords, Carter Paterson or any of the other firms, which was placed in a window to advise the passing carmen that there was a parcel to be collected. Since several firms covered the same district carmen were tempted to poach traffic by answering another's card. Rivalry between the carmen was keen, since bonuses were offered according to ^{the} volume of traffic brought in, and such episodes at times resulted in roadside scuffles and even serious physical injury. One of Pickfords' men lost the sight of one eye in this way.¹²⁶

The competition for traffic also involved strains of another kind for the carmen. For both collection and delivery services the various firms competed to get their vans onto the round first each morning in order to secure the best of the traffic. Pickfords watched Carter Paterson very closely in this respect. The timing of Carter Paterson's vans was carefully noted and efforts made to ensure that Pickfords' own vans reached their rounds just a few minutes earlier. In January 1906 the addition of a motor van for depot work gave Pickfords an edge over other firms in the Acton district. Pickfords started deliveries at 8.30 a.m., Carter Paterson at 8.40 and the London Parcels Delivery Company at 9.20.¹²⁷ Similar pressure to stretch the working day existed in the evenings also since there was traffic to be picked up by the firm offering the latest collection. The inevitable result for the carmen was a very long working day. At the turn of the century a fifteen or sixteen hour working day was not uncommon, and conditions are not likely to have improved in subsequent years.

¹²⁶ Minutes Directors' committee 12 Aug. 1908 Pic 1/14.

¹²⁷ Board Minutes, 31 January 1906 Pic 1/7.

A state of 'cat and mouse equilibrium'¹²⁸ would seem an apt summary of the conditions existing in the London parcels trade at the time. Vigorous competition with moderate profit-taking is generally regarded as being 'healthy' for the public but excessive competition as 'unhealthy' since it is always likely to result in some arrangement between the interested parties to reduce the damage being caused. Efforts of this kind were made. In May 1905 Pickfords was in touch with the directors of Globe Parcels Express about the possibility of a working arrangement but apparently nothing came of it.¹²⁹ By the beginning of 1907 the force of competition was clearly being felt more keenly as Pickfords took steps to fight off Beans Express and Carter Paterson at various places.¹³⁰ In addition trade began to weaken later in the year. Again the possibility of a working arrangement arose and this time agreement was reached between Pickfords, Carter Paterson and Bean Express, "for the improvement of the service to the public, economy in administration and their mutual convenience."¹³¹ The scheme originally promoted envisaged the pooling of future profits on an agreed basis¹³² but the final scheme was much looser, designed primarily to prevent price-cutting and thus further erosion of profit margins.

The provisions of the agreement were administered by a council, composed of one member from each board, whose unanimous decisions were binding on each party. An agreed schedule of rates was drawn up which no party was to underquote. The council

128 E.A.G. Robinson Monopoly (C.U.P. 1941) p 27.

129 Board Minutes, 31 May 1905 Pic 1/6.

130 Ibid, 6, 13 Feb. 1907 Pic 1/8; Minutes Directors' committee 12 June 1907 Pic 1/13.

131 Working agreement dated 24 Oct. 1907 CP 2/19; see Minutes Directors' committee, 16 Oct. 1907 Pic 1/13; Board Minutes 30 Oct. 1907 Pic 1/8.

132 Carter Paterson Board Minutes 18 July, 7 Nov. 1907 CP 1/2.

had the power to revise the agreed rates or to add new services not then included. If a customer of one party approached either of the other two, he was to be quoted the same rate and the same trading terms re credit, discount and so on. The penalty for contravening these terms and securing a contract thereby was a fine equivalent to its total value to the aggrieved party over the preceeding three years or, for a contract of lesser past duration, thirty-six times the value of the monthly account. The signatories pledged themselves to assist each other "in the event of fire, strike, lock-out or labour combination" but otherwise the agreement was limited to the stated matters. For the rest each firm acted quite independently and none had any rights over the others. "It is not a partnership."¹³³

The scheme as negotiated was a relatively weak device by which to counter the force of allegedly excessive competition. It did nothing to promote positive economies of working, but, by securing a degree of co-operation in the form of non-competitive rates, would serve to hold the existing position. Much would depend on the spirit in which the agreement was interpreted, in respect of which the requirement that decisions of the council be unanimous to be binding was a source of weakness. Clearly none of the firms concerned was willing to subject itself to a controlling influence on the part of the others, even within the given limits of the agreement. There were, however, efforts to promote each other's interests beyond the limits of agreed rates. Pickfords, Carter Paterson and Beans began a mutual exchange of traffic for places outside of London whereby Pickfords consigned its own traffic to the other two at places where it had

133 Working agreement 24 Oct. 1907 CP 2/19.

no local office but they did and in turn received their traffic at other places.¹³⁴

The attempt to stabilise rates was subject to considerable pressure. The three firms might settle agreed rates between themselves but they lacked the means to impose their terms on firms which were not party to the working agreement. These did not hesitate to go in for further price-cutting. Carter Paterson felt the effects of Sutton's competition¹³⁵ and Pickfords retaliated vehemently when Globe Parcels Express got hold of one of its cartage contracts.¹³⁶ Indeed pressure of this kind is likely to have increased, against which the 1907 agreement was no shield. In 1909 a call was made for combined action by the carrying trade to prevent further rate cutting, so as to improve the efficiency of service to the public as well as restoring the trade to more prosperous conditions.¹³⁷ In addition there were signs of strain between the firms as Pickfords complained of others' actions which were alleged to infringe the agreement.¹³⁸ By 1911 the strain had become so great that the agreement broke down completely. From April 1911 the council ceased to meet.¹³⁹ Despite its breakdown, however, the 1907 scheme was not without result. It showed that in the circumstances the pressure to promote individual interests was too great to be easily resisted. This pitfall would be avoided only if the interests of all the parties were identical. The full amalgamation of the various firms was the logical and ultimately only certain way of solving their problem.

134 Minutes Directors' committee 14, 28 Aug., 4 Sept. 1907 Pic 1/13

135 Ibid, 14 Dec. 1910 Pic 1/16.

136 Ibid 28 March, 8, 22 April 1908 Pic 1/14.

137 World's Carriers Vol. 6 (1910-11) p 1.

138 Minutes Directors' committee 18 March, 28 Oct. 1908, 6, 13 Jan. 1909 Pic 1/14; 4 Jan 1911 Pic 1/16.

139 Ibid 19 April 1911 Pic 1/16.

The merging of Pickfords and Carter Paterson, the two major components, into a larger combine was by no means a novel idea. The idea of a working arrangement between the two had been broached in 1899¹⁴⁰ and two years later details were worked out how the two companies might, with the London Parcels Delivery Company, form a new, amalgamated enterprise.¹⁴¹ Although exploratory work continued into 1902 nothing came of these proposals, nor of a further consideration a few years later.¹⁴² However, just at the time the 1907 agreement was breaking up, rumours began to appear in the press of an impending amalgamation between the leading firms, and fears expressed that this might be a preliminary step to an increase in rates. Profits were accepted to have fallen to a low level, confirmation of the belief "that the competition between the existing companies is of the keenest character."¹⁴³ Although denials were put out, it seems that steps were already being taken towards an eventual amalgamation. In May 1911 Carter Paterson decided to increase its shareholding in the London Parcels Delivery Company up to £2,000 by buying up whatever shares came on the market.¹⁴⁴ The following January the firm's managing director was authorised to attend a conference of other carriers for the purpose of arranging an amalgamation.¹⁴⁵ By the September terms had been agreed between the four leading companies, Pickfords, Carter Paterson, Beans Express, and the London Parcels Delivery Company.¹⁴⁶ Speculation had continued through the year but definite news leaked out only in that month when the directors of the London Parcels Delivery

140 Board Minutes 17 Aug 1899 CP 1/1.

141 Ibid 29 March, 10 July 1901; Directors' report to AGM 4 Oct 1901 CP 1/2; the details of the proposed scheme are at CP 4/27.

142 Board Minutes, 23 Oct. 1908 CP 1/2.

143 The Times 20 April, also 22 June 1911; World's Carriers Vol. 7 (1910-11) p 235.

144 Board Minutes 4 May 1911 CP 1/1

145 Ibid 23 Jan 1912 CP 1/2.

146 The correspondence drafts, etc. associated with the amalgamation are at Pic 4/18; CP 2/19; CP 3/10; and Pic HH.

Company, a public company, announced a deferment on the distribution of the previous halfyear's profit on the anticipation of amalgamating with other companies.¹⁴⁷

It is impossible to tell from the record from which side the main impetus to secure an amalgamation came or the motives behind it. Equally it is difficult to assess the move in terms of Pickfords' overall development, in particular whether Pickfords entered the combine from a position of strength or weakness. There are certain grounds for believing that over the years from 1901, when the proposal was previously made, Pickfords' position relative to the other companies concerned had declined.

The figures in Table 11.4 show that, had the proposed amalgamation gone through in 1901, Pickfords would have dominated the joint company by contributing almost 60 per cent of the total capital against 35 per cent from Carter Paterson. In 1912 their positions were very largely reversed. Again in 1901 the form of amalgamation would have been by the creation of a new company to which the three component companies would have been eventually sold. The actual amalgamation in 1912 was carried through by the absorption of Pickfords and the London Parcels Delivery Company into an expanded Carter Paterson.

It is possible that these changes owed something to technical difficulties and reflect the legal form by which the amalgamation was made. It was noted in 1901 that because certain Carter Paterson shares were held in trust a form of amalgamation which involved the sale of Carter Paterson to Pickfords would entail legal problems on that score. These

¹⁴⁷ World's Carriers Vol. 8 (1911-12) p 338.

Table 11.4. Allocation of new capital between component firms
1901 and 1912

	<u>1901</u>		<u>1912</u>	
	<u>Capital (£)</u>	<u>Percentage share</u>	<u>Capital (£)</u>	<u>Percentage share</u>
Total	667,016		720,700 ¹	
Pickfords	389,661	58.4	272,950	37.9
Carter Paterson	223,110	33.5	354,750	49.2
London Parcels Delivery Company	54,245	8.1	93,000	12.9

Source: 1901 Figures CP 4/27; 1912 figures -
Agreement and Amalgamation, 28 Aug.1912
Pic 3/10; memorandum to the Amalgamation,
Pic HH.

Note 1: This figure is issued share and loan
capital; nominal capital was £775,000;
plus £350,000 Debenture Stock.

could largely be avoided if the transaction were arranged the other way.¹⁴⁸ To some extent, therefore, the changes indicated by Table 11.4 possibly reflect precautions to avoid the problem. However it would seem that the alteration was a matter of substance. Although L.H.Baxendale became chairman of the new company, Pickfords not only took on a subordinate position but came under the control of the shareholders of the pre-existing Carter Paterson company. All voting rights in the new company were vested in the ordinary shares, which were, distributed, 76,630 to Pickfords, 33,000 to the London Parcels Delivery Company and 145,370 to Carter Paterson. In other words the existing owners of Pickfords prior to the amalgamation, could be outvoted in the new company, even when joined by the London Parcels Delivery Company, by the existing owners of Carter Paterson.¹⁴⁹ Not only had the Baxendales given up ownership of the family firm, they had also lost control. Thus the amalgamation of 1912 marks another major stage in Pickfords' history.

¹⁴⁸ Opinion of F.B.Palmer 19 June 1901 CP 4/27.

¹⁴⁹ Memorandum to the amalgamation Pic HH

CHAPTER 12

AMALGAMATION AND AFTER: PICKFORDS 1912-1920

The amalgamation was carried through by a reconstruction of Carter Paterson, to which the other three companies became subsidiaries. Carter Paterson's nominal share capital was increased from £250,000 to £775,000 and powers were taken to issue 5% Debenture Stock up to the value of £135,000. The amalgamation was effected as of 1 July 1912 but the first board meeting of the newly expanded Carter Paterson company, which now became the governing body of the associated companies, was not held until the end of October.¹

The formal arrangement adopted between Carter Paterson and each of the other three companies differed in several important ways. Beans Express Ltd was bought for £36,360 cash and passed into the direct ownership and management of the joint-board. The existing owner-managers, Mr. W.W.Allen and his son Percy, both withdrew from the business and were replaced by Carter Paterson nominees. Beans Express continued to trade under its own name, but it became a parcels collecting agency only: all deliveries were made through the parcels service of one of the other companies.²

The London Parcels Delivery company was also bought up 'as a going concern'. The purchase price was £93,000 against the L.P.D. company's £60,000 ordinary share capital and thus included £33,000 as payment for the company's assets and goodwill. By buying up the equity Carter Paterson acquired overall control of of the L.P.D. company but the transaction was settled by the

1. Board Minutes 28 Oct. 1912, CP 1/3. The terms of agreement were before Pickfords' directors during September and October, and were approved by a special general meeting 16 October 1912, Pic 1/9.
2. Board Minutes 4 Sept. 1912 CP 1/2, 2 Nov 1912 CP 1/3; Amalgamation agreement, CP 3/10. Allen had formerly been traffic manager of Carter Paterson but after a dispute had joined Beans and built it up in opposition. The associate company he had founded, Allens' Motor Express Ltd, was included in the agreement. The Window Card Vol. 3 No. 5 Sept. 1933 p 253 ff; Summer 1946, p 3.

issue of ordinary and preferred shares in Carter Paterson to the full value of the purchase price. Unlike Beans, therefore, the L.P.D. company with 33,000 ordinary shares, received voting rights and representation on the joint-board. Three L.P.D. directors joined the Carter Paterson board and, as nominees of the board, continued in the day-to-day management of their company.³

Beans Express and the London Parcels Delivery company were small concerns, the junior partners in the merger. They were essentially bought up and taken over. By contrast the terms arranged between Pickfords and Carter Paterson were rather more complex.⁴ Pickfords was not bought up in the sense that both Beans and the L.P.D. company were but rather it was merged with Carter Paterson by the limited financial arrangement sufficient to ensure effective control to Carter Paterson and efficient combined working. Carter Paterson bought out Pickfords' share capital but no payment was made for Pickfords' trading assets. By owning the equity, the joint-board possessed ultimate control while leaving Pickfords, in practice, with much of its independence. Any suggestion of undue domination by Carter Paterson, given the essential nature of the arrangement as a combination between partners, was avoided, as well as the burden of the considerable extra capital that would have been required to finance the purchase of Pickfords' assets. Since Pickfords' intention could not have been other than to co-operate positively with its partners, the outright purchase of Pickfords was not necessary for effective joint working.

³ Amalgamation agreement CP 3/10.

⁴ Ibid; also Memorandum as to the amalgamation, Pic HH.

Carter Paterson paid £433,700 to acquire control of Pickfords.⁵ £100,000 was paid in 5% Debentures and the balance in cash but the whole of this sum was committed to the purchase of Carter Paterson shares. Pickfords bought 74,630 ordinary shares of £1 each, which carried voting rights and representation by three directors on the joint board. The remaining money purchased 259,070 £1 preference shares, of which Pickfords retained only about two fifths. The major portion, 163,450 shares in all, were distributed, at Pickfords' expense, between the shareholders of the 'old' Carter Paterson company "in consideration of their consenting to the amalgamation agreement." This was worth roughly £10,000 in any year that a dividend was declared. Pickfords' shareholders, too, received their inducement - a guaranteed £5,000 p.a. from interest on their debenture holdings together with a further £5,750 as a preferred charge on profits.

The character and composition of capital holdings in the joint enterprise is revealing. The shareholders of the 'old' Carter Paterson company put up the bulk of the risk capital of the joint enterprise - 145,370 of the 253,000 ordinary shares issued. Pickfords and the London Parcels Delivery company together contributed less than that. Indeed Pickfords' shareholders were primarily investors in the amalgamated company. A comparison (Table 12.1) of the shareholding of Pickfords' directors in their own company with that in the 'new' Carter Paterson shows that, although each increased his total capital holding, the share of ordinary capital was significantly reduced

5 The following is based on Amalgamation agreement CP 3/10 and Memorandum as to the amalgamation, Pic HH, together with the source material for Table 12.1.

Table 12.1. The capital holdings of Pickfords' directors
in Pickfords Ltd. and subsequently Carter
Paterson & Co. Ltd.

I.	<u>Pickfords Ltd. 30 June 1912.</u>				
		<u>L.H. Baxendale</u>	<u>F.H. Baxendale</u>	<u>N.O. Walker</u>	<u>G.V. Baxendale</u>
1. Preference shares	25,000	16,200	10,000	500	
2. Total privile ged capital	25,000	16,200	10,000	500	
3. Ordinary shares	78,541	42,359	25,000	10,000	
4. Total capital	103,541	58,559	35,000	10,500	
5. Ordinary as a percentage of total capital	75.9%	72.3%	71.4%	95.2%	
II.	<u>Carter Paterson & Co. Ltd.</u>				
1. Debentures	49,190	29,585	18,018	3,207	
2. Preference shares	48,172	25,981	15,333	6,139	
3. Total privile ged capital	97,362	55,566	33,351	9,346	
4. Ordinary shares	37,597	20,277	11,968	4,782	
5. Total capital	134,959	75,843	45,319	14,128	
6. Ordinary as a percentage of total capital	27.9%	26.7%	26.4%	33.8%	

Source: Section I, allocation of shares
as of 30 June, 1912, Board Minutes, passim
Pic 1/9; Section II Application (for shares)
and nomination by Pickfords Ltd, 3 Dec. 1912
CP 2/19.

both relatively and absolutely. It is impossible to say whether this was the price Pickfords' directors demanded or the inducement the Patersons were willing to offer for the amalgamation to go ahead.

The logical complement of this arrangement was that the Carter Paterson side, having taken the greater share of the risk, should have the major management role in the new company. So although L.H.Baxendale became chairman of the joint-board, after some wrangling over the terms of his position, he was largely a figure-head and apparently took little or no part in routine management. Effective power rested with the Patersons. J.J. Paterson became vice-chairman and managing-director; H.R.Paterson became senior director-manager and deputised in the managing-director's absence. When J.J.Paterson retired from the position in 1915, H.R.Paterson succeeded him.⁶ All the other directors, with the apparent exception of F.H.Baxendale who was in any case soon succeeded by his son Guy Vernon,⁷ were expected to take their share of management duties.

How was Pickfords affected, in a formal sense, by the amalgamation? The company was, of course, fully owned by Carter Paterson, by its purchase of the equity, and all the directors' qualifying shares were held in trust. Pickfords' board was expanded to accommodate three representatives from Carter Paterson, J.J.Paterson, H.R.Paterson and J. Paterson. L.H.Baxendale continued as chairman.⁸ None of the Patersons joined the directors' committee which continued the day-to-day management of Pickfords as before. At this level, therefore, the

6 Board Minutes 28 Oct.1912 CP 1/3; 3, 7 Nov, 1 Dec. (AGM) 1915 CP 1/5.

7 Ibid 12 Feb, 9 July 1913 CP 1/3.

8 Board Minutes 16 Oct, 19 Nov. 1912 Pic 1/9.

amalgamation, although facilitating joint working, resulted in no formal, structural change. This was delayed until the beginning of 1915. At board level, however, there was one fundamental change in that all matters which involved capital spending, whether the purchase of a small business or orders for motor vehicles, required the joint board's sanction and therefore had to be referred.⁹ This was the necessary consequence of the arrangement by which the amalgamation of Pickfords and Carter Paterson had been settled. The joint-board's authority and its effective power over the four associated companies rested on its control of the finances.

On the whole the two boards co-operated amicably, although there was the odd occasion when votes of the joint-board divided along party lines.¹⁰ When dissension between the boards did occur, it invariably involved finance. Since Carter Paterson, as the vehicle of the amalgamation, was obliged to supply the financial requirements of the joint enterprise it received all the profits earned by the component companies. Thus in 1913 and 1914, as Table 12.2 shows, Pickfords distributed virtually the whole of the available net balance, and only a little less in 1915. Pickfords, however, soon found difficulty in meeting some of its larger items of expenditure, especially annual insurance premiums of approximately £75,000, and turned to the joint-board for assistance. Carter Paterson's finances were also severely stretched by this time and J.J. Paterson strongly objected to Pickfords' request. He apparently believed that these payments were in some way internal to Pickfords and should not be

9 Minutes, Directors committee, 27 Nov 1912, 14 May 1913, Pic 1/17; Board Minutes, 19 May, 30 Sept. 1913; 5 May, 23 June 1914 Pic 1/9.

10 Board Minutes 11 March, 25 March, 8 April, 22 April 1914 CP 1/4.

Table 12.2. Pickfords profits and ordinary dividends
1912-1919

	<u>Net profit</u> <u>(£)</u>	<u>Distributed</u> <u>profit (£)</u>	<u>Ordinary</u> <u>dividend</u>	<u>Balance carried</u> <u>forward (£)</u>
1912	6,956 ¹			
1913	15,116	14,226	8%	890
1914	15,944	15,694	9%	1,140
1915	10,167 (9630)	8,774	4%	1,576
1916	7,214	4,194	1%	4,596
1917	8,585	4,974	1½%	8,207
1918	23,802	21,648	5%	10,360
1919	47,572	5,215		52,717

Note 1. On an accounting year ending 31 December; all other years end 30 June. All figures are rounded to the nearest pound.

Source: These figures are based on the summary accounts presented to the annual general meeting. In 1915 the net profit figure was later revised to the smaller sum given in brackets. From 1916 there is a marked divergence between these figures and the net profit figures entered in the Profit and Loss Account (Pic 4/28) from which certain interest payments were no longer deducted. The figures in the above table tally with those, for 1912-1918, supplied to Hay's Wharf Cartage Co. in 1919 (Pic HH).

subsidised from the joint finances. It was shown, however, that Pickfords' basic problem was not a lack of earning power but that, by paying over virtually the whole of its distributable profit to the joint board, the firm was being drained of adequate cash resources. It was recommended that as these were annually recurring charges, proper provision should be made for them either by transferring an equal sum to a special reserve account or simply carry forward a much larger balance than hitherto. This question came to a head in the spring of 1916 and it is clear from the accounts of that year (Table. 12.2) that the latter solution was adopted.¹¹

It was no doubt the financial difficulties of the parent company which brought a touch of acerbity to the disagreement. Before the amalgamation Carter Paterson had enjoyed a secure financial position, with good profits and healthy accumulated reserves, but this soon weakened under the strain of financing the member companies. In each of the first two years of the amalgamation the group made a combined profit in excess of £24,000 but in 1915, after the first few months of war, this slipped to £13,000. The ordinary dividend was passed over. Net receipts, i.e. trading and investment income, fell from £54,800 in 1913 to £29,550 in 1915, and this at a time when the company's need was for increased revenue.¹² From early in 1913 Carter Paterson had to meet the sharp competition of a newcomer to the parcels trade W.&G.Express Carriers Ltd.¹³ and was itself planning a major programme of capital spending. Consideration was being

11 Ibid 2, 9, June 1915 CP 1/4.; also Board Minutes 1 June 1915, 29 Feb, 24 March, 14 April 1916 Pic 1/9.

12 These figures are taken from the Board Minutes, 1, 8, 15 Oct. 1913 CP 1/3; 13, 14 Oct 1914 CP 1/4. 1 Dec. 1915 CP 1/5. The financial year ran from 1 July to 30 June.

13 See below p.339

given to the purchase of 100 vehicles for the extension of its motor delivery service to include towns up to eighty miles from London.¹⁴

In March 1913 the joint-board decided to seek a loan; £120,000 was originally discussed but the board finally settled for £50,000 from the Phoenix Assurance Company. This must have given only temporary respite since by the beginning of 1914 the financial situation was again acute. All current income was absorbed by various interest payments and insurance premiums; Carter Paterson had nearly reached the bank's limit on its overdraft, but still needed a further £23,000 to cover capital expenditure already incurred. The reaction to this situation demonstrated a marked difference of opinion between J.J.Paterson and L.H.Baxendale as to the proper form of business finance. Carter Paterson had been built up, cautiously but steadily, on the well-tried principles of self-finance; past profits, not loans, secured the next phase of development. Pickfords, by contrast, had made fairly extensive use of the mortgage and loan market.¹⁵ The Phoenix loan was opposed by both J.J.Paterson and J. Paterson on the grounds that it damaged the effort to build up the business out of revenue. J.J.Paterson deplored the burden of interest which excessive borrowing imposed on the shareholders and forcibly re-iterated his views on the occasion of this latest crisis.. L.H.Baxendale, on the other hand, implied that the group was, and had been from the start, under-capitalised

¹⁴ . Commercial Motor Vol. 17 (1913) pp 339-340.

¹⁵ Chapter 11 p.287.

to the extent of £100,000 and was clearly unconvinced that self-finance would provide the scale of funds required. When asked, twice, for £5,000 from Pickfords to help reduce Carter Paterson's overdraft he refused. The merits of going public were advocated by H.R. Paterson but not pursued.¹⁶

Problems of finance gave added urgency to pressing on with a programme of rationalisation so as to release the cost reductions and economies of scale of a large-scale enterprise, the essential economic logic of the amalgamation. This would involve, apart from the elimination of wasteful competition, the centralisation of common services, such as vehicle and horse maintenance, and the concentration of customer services on that section of the group best placed or best able to perform them. Since prior to the amalgamation there was a relatively low degree of complementarity of product between the four firms, only by a major rationalisation scheme could economies be effected.

There is little doubt that a rigorous rationalisation programme was intended by the joint-board from the start and remained a long-run objective. However, factors other than the narrowly economic tended to weigh in favour of a slow, rather cautious and low-key approach. In the first place there was no wish to draw public attention, by a sudden flurry of changes and closures, to the fact that a strong, monopolistic combine had been created in the London parcels trade. Indeed no public announcement of the amalgamation was made; instead "it was agreed the policy should be to keep the new arrangement as reasonably quiet as possible."¹⁷ Even the re-naming of the group's vans once

16 Board Minutes, 26 March, 28, 30 May 1913, 28 Jan, 1914, CP 1/3; 11, 25 March 1914 CP 1/4.

17 Ibid 28 Oct, 1912 CP 1/3; The World's Carriers, which had previously twice denied the truth of rumours that an amalgamation was pending, made no comment at all. No mention was made in the Commercial Motor until September 1913 (Vol. 18 p 99) when the move was welcomed as promoting improved carrying facilities, greater efficiency and economy.

once brought into a common pool, was to be held back for some time, "and then be very gradual."¹⁸

The other major obstacle to an immediate re-structuring of the associated companies lay in the possible effect on the staff. The directors realised the importance of retaining the confidence of their experienced staff and having their support in promoting the rearrangement of business.¹⁹ Efficient joint working required former rivals to work harmoniously and flexibly with each other as colleagues. Competition for traffic had been keen and company loyalty strong, and the jealousies and strains which this bred could not be expected to disappear overnight. In addition the pooling of traffic and men disclosed various anomalies in the structure of wages, especially between Pickfords and Carter Paterson. Pickfords' wages for comparable jobs tended to be higher than those of Carter Paterson and it took some time and trouble for them to be harmonised on a common basis.²⁰ Clearly the joint-board had a much better chance of carrying the men with them in a stable employment situation than if, due to cuts in services and staff, jobs were felt to be at risk.

For reasons such as these the joint-board's management policy was for limited objectives in the immediate post-amalgamation phase.²¹ The construction of a coherent business concern out of several disparate parts without undue disturbance to staff or dislocation of business was felt to be difficult enough. Much standardisation of business practices had to be carried through, e.g. methods of accounting, invoicing of traffic, before proceeding further. A start was made by bringing Beans Express and the

18 Ibid 6Nov1912 CP 1/3

19 Ibid 28 Oct. 6 Nov 1912, CP 1/3

20 See below p 337

21 Board Minutes Report of management committee, 6 Nov 1912 CP 1/13.

London Parcels Delivery company into line with Carter Paterson, on the basis of best practice, and leaving Pickfords to be worked in later. Other than that, the objective was as close working as possible between the associated companies without any structural change.

The first stage of 'closer working' was essentially no more than a straight-forward working agreement between a number of concerns which otherwise remained independent. The four firms continued their individual parcels' collection services for the time being, but deliveries could be effected through either Pickfords, Carter Paterson or the London Parcels Delivery company irrespective of which firm had collected the goods in the first place. From December 1912 arrangements were made for Pickfords to deliver for Carter Paterson and the L.P.D. company in an increasing number of places, and vice versa.²² These arrangements however incorporated a degree of rationalisation in that Pickfords largely, but not entirely, withdrew from parcels delivery in London and became the vehicle through which the group's entire provincial deliveries were effected. Deliveries in the London area were handled chiefly by Carter Paterson and the L.P.D. company. Carter Paterson had a few depots outside of London, the L.P.D. company, none at all; Pickfords alone of the associated companies possessed a substantial number of provincial outlets. Thus the branches co-operated, on the basis of their relative strengths, but remained formally distinct.

The same principle applied when Pickfords began to handle Carter Paterson's foreign traffic. Carter Paterson lacked a

²² Minutes, Directors' committee 20 Nov, 11 Dec 1912; 8, 29 Jan, 12 Feb, 5 March, 2, 9 April, 14 May, 9 July 1913 Pic 1/17, 1/18.

foreign service such as Pickfords had long had and so passed on to Pickfords all the traffic it collected in London for delivery overseas. However Pickfords was charged for cartage from the suburbs and commission on each item handed over.²³ The only sign of a joint service properly so-called was the introduction in June 1913, of a new, hourly collection and delivery service, using motors, to the City and West End.²⁴

In time, Carter Paterson took over all parcels delivery work, including that to the outer suburbs. It is likely that Carter Paterson's Home Counties Express service had always had an edge on Pickfords' equivalent, its Outer Area Service, but in any case the latter was steadily absorbed into the former service. It was estimated that by the end of 1913, after twelve months or so of combined working, Pickfords was handing over to Carter Paterson traffic to the total value of £12,000p.a.²⁵ What mattered, of course, was how the group as a whole fared but it is possible that from Pickfords' own immediate point of view this arrangement worked to its disadvantage in terms of revenue. Pickfords' traffic receipts on its 'Town' (i.e. London) business declined from £179,430 in the December half-year 1912 to £151,000 in the June half-year 1914. Against this fall of £30,000 revenue from 'Country' traffic remained fairly steady, fluctuating between £74,270 and £79,675.²⁶

The specialisation of function with respect to parcels traffic between Pickfords and Carter Paterson undoubtedly owed much to the relative distribution of their depots but it is also possible

23 Ibid 17 June 1914 Pic 1/18.

24 Ibid 25 June 1913 Pic 1/17.

25 Ibid 3 Dec 1913 Pic 1/17.

26 Profit and loss accounts, Pic 4/28.

that Carter Paterson performed parcels delivery work more efficiently than Pickfords. It was stated in 1919, at the time of the sale of Pickfords to Hays Wharf Cartage company, that Pickfords had never found its parcel work to be profitable.²⁷ There is nothing in the record by which this could be directly confirmed or denied, but there is some evidence which suggests that in terms of cost per unit of revenue Carter Paterson performed its business more efficiently than Pickfords. Figures for the December half-year 1912 show that Pickfords, on a turnover of £258,000, paid £2.6.4³d on claims for losses and breakages, for every £100 revenue: Carter Paterson paid 18/7d per £100 on a turnover of £207,400. The London Parcels Delivery company, specialising in parcels traffic, paid out 14/5³d per £100 revenue on a turnover less than a third that of Carter Paterson.²⁸ Again these figures cannot be pressed too far because, for example, Pickfords engaged in a much wider range of traffic than either of the other two. Parcels traffic was a messy sort of business involving much invoicing, checking and handling, and was especially liable to claims for damage or loss and thus rapidly rising costs unless carefully watched. It would seem reasonable to conclude that on the whole Carter Paterson controlled its costs rather more successfully than Pickfords.

The concentration of parcels services on Carter Paterson, and the L.P.D. company to a lesser extent, resulted in certain positive economies as a proportion of the men, horses, vans and premises used in the business became superfluous to current needs. When Pickfords town cartage depot at Edmonton was merged with

²⁷ Letter to the directors of Hay's Wharf Cartage company re the purchase of Pickfords, 6 May (?1919), Pic HH.

²⁸ Board Minutes 26 Feb, 25 June 1913 CP 1/3.

the other branches, 21 horses and 13 vans were withdrawn; at Walthamstow 1 motor, 17 horses and 9 vans.²⁹ In the case of surplus premises, some were sold and others were converted to other uses; Pickfords' town cartage depot in Poplar High Street became a motor repair shop for the group.³⁰ The closure of Pickfords' parcels premises at Edmonton, Kingston and Walthamstow were reported to have reduced operating costs by some £3,500 p.a; by the autumn of 1916, when the programme had been much extended, this figure had been revised to £120,000 p.a.³¹ Further economies were added by the centralisation of common services. Veterinary arrangements were brought under central control.³² In September 1914 Pickfords' van repair shop at Glasshouse Yard was sold and all future work concentrated on Carter Paterson's premises at Stoke Newington.³³ By a variety of small steps like these some economies of scale began to accrue to the joint enterprise, reinforcing the policy of closer working but without initiating any major structural change.

This rather hesitant programme of change continued for over two years from the date of amalgamation. The joint board had intended to move on to much closer integration at an earlier date but had been frustrated for two main reasons - intermittent labour troubles through 1913 and the early part of 1914 and the appearance of a new and vigorous competitor in the London parcels trade.³⁴

There were two distinct strands to the labour unrest in which the group was concerned during these months. In one respect

29 Minutes Directors' committee 28 Jan, 12 Nov 1914 Pic 1/18.

30 Board Minutes 13 Aug, 1913, CP 1/3; The Kingston depot was transferred to household removals, Minutes, Directors' committee 17 Sept. 1913 Pic 1/13.

31 Board Minutes 10 Dec. 1913, 11 Feb 1914, CP 1/13; 6 Sept. 1916 CP 1/5.

32 Minutes Directors' committee 9 July 1913. Pic 1/13

33 Board Minutes 20 May, 4 Nov 1914 CP 1/4.

34 Ibid Directors' report to AGM 14 Oct. 1914 CP 1/4.

the friction was purely internal as the increasing intergration of the four associated companies revealed certain disparities between them in the rates of pay for similar jobs. The L.P.D. company's men objected to a proposal to extend to them the scale of wages and commission applied at Carter Paterson's main depot at Goswell road. The directors made certain concessions in their favour but added a rider that they would have to come into line before very long. In September 1913 the horse-keepers at Goswell road asked for an extra 2/- per week to give them parity with Pickfords' men doing the same work and a few weeks later there was trouble with some of the Beans Express men over similar complaints.³⁵ These episodes were minor nuisances more than anything else but they expressed real anomalies that had to be ironed out before full integration could properly proceed. Other than the episode mentioned there is no sign of strikes to maintain differentials and probably the problem was tackled by a ^{upward} general levelling of wages.

The most serious unrest derived from issues and events which were essentially rational in character. Although the strikes and militancy of 1912 did not recur on the same scale in 1913, tension and disturbances continued.³⁶ In September 1913 Pickfords' directors recorded labour troubles in Dublin, Liverpool, Birmingham and Manchester.³⁷ Within a few days, the joint-board had its own strike to deal with.³⁸ On September 25 various groups of men employed at Goswell road, Carter Paterson's main depot, went on strike for improved wages and hours and recognition of the Transport Workers Federation. The leaders of the Amalgamated Society of Carter Paterson Employees urged the board

35 Ibid 9 July, 26 Sept. 8 Oct 1913 CP 1/3

36 Pelling History of British trade unionism p 138.

37 Minutes Directors' committee 17 Sept. 1913 PC 1/13

38 The following is based on Board Minutes 26 Sept, 1, 15 Oct. 1913 CP 1/3; also Commercial Motor Vol. 18 (1913-14) p 107.

to refuse recognition to the T.W.F.. but instead to publish the rates it would offer and then open the gates. This was done, but to no avail. To get a return to work the board was obliged to give way; they conceded recognition and most of the men's demands on wages and hours. Indeed the board's surrender was almost abject for, to avoid further trouble, two men who had been dismissed and complained of victimisation were hurriedly re-instated and two others who worked only two hours and claimed a full day's wages had their claim met.

So the directors lost that round, perhaps being taken unawares, and no doubt it rankled because they made sure they won the next contest.³⁹ Part of the settlement of the September strike was the concession of a 56 hour week, instead of the 54 hours demanded, with the promise that a further reduction would be considered in six months time. When this time came, however, the directors decided that it should be left to the men to raise the matter and that in any case no further reduction could be considered. It was realised that a strike at Goswell road would be the result and the directors accordingly made their preparations. Arrangements were made that in the event of a strike 150 men would be drafted in from other depots and the head office clerical staff be called up. All the weekly employees except the senior supervisors were ^{to be} down graded to the daily staff. The strike was delayed until late April but when it came the management moved decisively. Men were immediately brought in from other depots as well as all grades of head office staff, together with "imported free labour". Traffic was diverted to other

39 Ibid 25 Feb, 25, 27 March, 3, 22 April 1914 CP 1/3, 1/4.

depots and successfully cleared. None of the men who left their jobs were re-instated but were permanently replaced by the imported labour. The new men lacked the experience of those they replaced and had to be trained up, but this was the price which had to be paid. Two points are of general interest in this episode, the lack of solidarity among the men and the marked contrast in the directors' action compared with that of six months previously. There is no obvious explanation for this turn-round on their part. It seems, however, that the pressure of labour unrest eased from that time.

Apart from labour troubles, the slow progress towards full amalgamation was attributed to opposition in the parcels carrying trade. Although the source of this opposition was not specified, it almost certainly referred to the activities of a firm new to the parcels trade, W.&G. Express Carriers. This firm was a new venture of W.&G. du Cros who are perhaps better known for the fleet of Napier built taxi-cabs they operated in London.⁴⁰ In the couple or so years prior to 1913 the motor-cab trade in London had been frequently disrupted by labour disputes and a motorised delivery service of light parcels seemed to offer "a second line of defence." The new service was announced in February, 1913,⁴¹ commenced within a few weeks and built up very rapidly. By the September of 1913 W.&G. Express had 100 vans on the road and was soon taking additional premises and planning a further 250 vehicles.⁴² Such rapid expansion suggests that entry to the trade must have been relatively easy when

40 C.H.Wilson and W.J.Reader Men and machines, a history of D. Napier & Son (1958) p 71, p 94; for the background to the formation of the parcels business Commercial Motor Vol. 17 (1913) p 152; also World's Carriers Vol. 10 (1913-14) p 27.

41 Board Minutes 26 Feb. 1913 CP 1/3.

42 Ibid 10 Dec. 1913 CP 1/3; Commercial Motor Vol. 18 (1913-14) p 1, 74.

considerable capital resources were available. In no sense was the appearance of W.&G.Express a direct or indirect response to an attempted monopoly but the firm's forceful competition undermined what had been one of the prime hopes of the amalgamated concerns, that of eliminating rate cutting and ensuring full rates on all classes of traffic.

Immediately the joint-board heard of the new company, H.R. Paterson was deputed to see its promoters to try and come to an understanding concerning rates. The du Cros denied both any wish to cut rates and allegations that such occurrences were taking place. Satisfactory terms could not be agreed and the joint-board decided that traffic must be held at any cost.⁴³ The associated companies thus found themselves back in the vicious circle of lengthening hours of work and rate-cutting from which they had so recently sought to release themselves by amalgamation. Indeed the position was probably considerably worse for W.&G. Express mounted a formidable and very successful campaign,⁴⁴ which proved very costly to meet. At a time when the financial position was already strained, the board had to authorise capital spending on additional motors, which it had hoped to avoid.⁴⁵ Also when W.&G. extended its services to include Home Counties deliveries but at the rate for suburban deliveries, Carter Paterson had no option but to follow suite by lowering its own charges.⁴⁶

The joint-board clearly lacked the resources to drive off the new competition but turned to the other option of buying off its

43 Board Minutes 26 Feb, 12 March 1913 CP 1/3.

44 There were many instances of W.&G. taking business from Carter Paterson, Pickfords and Beans. Board Minutes March 1913 to March 1914 passim CP 1/3, 1/4; Minutes Directors' committee Pic 1/17, 1/18.

45 Board Minutes 23 April, 25 June, 13 Aug. 1913 CP 1/3.

46 Ibid 28 Jan, 11 Feb 1913 CP 1/3; Commercial Motor Vol. 18 (1913-14) p 454.

competitor.⁴⁷ Consideration of this possibility was taken up as early as July 1913 and discussions continued spasmodically for several months: but W.&G. was not to be bought off cheaply, while J.J.Paterson was not convinced of the firm's viability. In time the subject of discussion shifted from take-over to amalgamation and the terms of an arrangement on the latter basis had been more or less agreed by early August 1914 when the outbreak of war intervened. With the consent of both sides the proposal was dropped. To some extent the group's problems on this score largely solved themselves as the W.&G. company increasingly turned to war work for the government and reduced its drive for parcels traffic.

By the autumn of 1914, therefore, the way was at last clear for a full re-organisation of the joint-business to be implemented. Details were worked out for a new structure of management and working and the revised scheme was introduced from 1 January 1915. The group's various activities, itemised as 21 in all,⁴⁸ were ordered into major categories and reduced to eight main sections. Each section was supervised by a committee of three directors who, together with the managing director, were responsible to the board for its routine management. The directors served on each committee for three years, on a rotational basis, so that over a period of years all would acquire a detailed knowledge of the business.⁴⁹ L.H.Baxendale did not join any of them. At the same time the distribution of services within the group, essentially between Carter Paterson and Pickfords, was also finalised.⁵⁰

47 The following is based on Board Minutes 30 July 13 Aug 1913 CP 1/3; 6, 20 May, 1 July, 7, 12 Aug 1914 CP 1/4.

48 Ibid 11 Feb. 1914 CP 1/3.

49 Ibid, 4 Nov, 2, 9, 30 Dec. 1914 CP 1/4. The eight management committees were, 1. Finance; 2, London traffic, which included the Home Counties Express; 3. Heavy haulage and hire contracts; 4. Country traffic; 5. Property; 6. Horse and provender; 7 Van and motor works; 8. Audit.

50 Committee 2 essentially supervised the Carter Paterson side and committees 3 and 4 the Pickford side. The other five committees acted for the whole joint business.

The implications for Pickfords were two-fold, first, all parcels business was finally given up and for the future Pickfords specialised in two main areas - heavy haulage and contract hire, and country traffic, which was taken to include foreign traffic, shipping, household removals and warehousing, ticket sales and van adverts. Essentially, therefore, Pickfords shed one of its past activities and continued the rest on behalf of the group as a whole. On the management side, secondly, there was rather more fundamental change. Each of these two sections was managed by a committee drawn from the whole of the joint-board: Pickfords' directors' committee, which had continued in the daily management of the business since the amalgamation, was now wound up. The position of Pickfords' board of directors remained unchanged. L.H.Baxendale recorded his hopes that the disappointingly slow progress towards amalgamation over the preceeding two years would now be replaced by speedy advance.⁵¹

Baxendale's hopes however, were only partially fulfilled for although the parcels business was reduced to a single service, relatively little progress was made in other respects. The reason was that war had broken out a few months before the re-organisation had been put into effect. It is significant that the inevitable dislocation of war was not considered sufficient reason to abandon a programme of reform which of itself necessarily involved further upsets. It is not that the disruption of war was likely to have been ignored or over-looked: the trade depression and strong inflation of horse and fodder prices during the Boer War was too recent an experience for that.⁵²

51 Board Minutes 19 Jan 1915 Pic 1/9

52 Directors' report to AGM 9 Aug 1900 CP 1/1; 4 Oct. 1901 CP 1/2.

But these influences had previously been relatively short-lived and absorbed without critical effects. What was not, and could not be, appreciated in 1914 was the intensity of the strain which total war was to bring, for an individual business as for the whole economy.

For years past both Carter Paterson and Pickfords had participated in the War Office Scheme whereby in return for a small annual subsidy firms contracted to release a given number of horses in the event of war. Certain classes of motor vehicles had recently been brought into a similar scheme. Immediately upon mobilization, therefore, the group was obliged to surrender a large number of horses and vehicles; fifty-seven motors were taken in London alone.⁵³ By the end of the War the group had been drained of 2,500 men, 1800 horses and 85 motors.⁵⁴ No business could withstand such losses without serious effect and it is not surprising that the push to full integration lost momentum. Indeed at times sheer survival seemed difficult enough.

The outbreak of war was soon followed by a whole range of shortages, of labour, motors, petrol, horse-fodder, which together with rising prices brought the joint business under severe strain. The loss of labour was especially serious on the parcels side since the carmen's detailed knowledge of their cartage and delivery rounds was an essential prop of the whole business. Large numbers of women and army rejects were taken on but the loss was primarily qualitative, and not easily made up. After the initial losses from voluntary enlistment, strenuous efforts were

53 Commercial Motor Vol. 19 (1914) p 596. See also World's Carriers Vol. 15 (1918-19) p 278 where it is stated that over 80 motors and nearly 2000 horses were mobilised with the original expeditionary force.

54 Memorandum on Carter Paterson & Co.'s business dated 11.4.1919 CP 4/33.

made to hold on to the most experienced and thus the most valuable staff. In May 1916 the Finsbury Recruitment^{Tribunal} proposed to take 670 men under thirty years of age, including nearly 350 of the best carmen. The board believed that such an outflow would push the company into liquidation and intervened directly with the Tribunal. On this occasion a reasonably satisfactory bargain was struck whereby, although 670 men had to be given up, the board was allowed to list and retain those carmen who were considered vital for the continuation of business.⁵⁵ However the outcome of subsequent approaches was not always so helpful. As the pressure for more and more front line troops mounted, it became increasingly impossible to resist the Tribunal's demands. From July 1917 reserved status was withdrawn from all the company's single men and married men aged thirty-one or less, thus opening the way to further recruitment.⁵⁶ In January 1918 the board offered to release all men aged between eighteen and twenty-four.⁵⁷

If the supply of qualified labour was the most critical shortage, other scarcities raised acute problems. It proved impossible, for example, at least in the short-run, to find replacements for the motors handed over to the War Office. Neither Leyland or Daimler could quote a delivery date and of 28 vehicles ordered from Tilling-Stevens, 25 were impressed by the Government before they left the factory.⁵⁸ The price of a Tilling-Stevens two-ton petrol motor went up by ten per cent within two weeks of war being declared.⁵⁹ Even if the situation later eased a little, the introduction of petrol rationing from 1 August 1916 together with a sharp rise in price - in November 1916 the contract price

55 Board Minutes 10 May 1916, 21 March, 4 April 1917 CP 1/5.

56 Ibid 25 July 1917 CP 1/5.

57 Ibid 9 Jan 1918 CP 1/6.

58 Ibid 12, 19 Aug, 2 Sept. 21 Oct, 2 Dec. 1914 CP 1/4.

59 Ibid 19 Aug.

of petrol supplied to the group rose from 1/- to 1/11½d a gallon - brought new difficulties.⁶⁰ Coal-gas was advocated in the trade journals as an alternative fuel⁶¹ and steam made a strong revival,⁶² but the board's main response was to replace motors with horses.⁶³ Apparently enough horses were available to do this, but the supply of hay and straw became a nightmare. Both of these crops came under War Office control and at times, especially through 1918, the board had to fight hard, on one occasion threatening a question in the House of Commons, in order to get even the minimum requirements.⁶⁴ The condition of the stud deteriorated badly on account of the shortage of fodder and the directors began to turn to steam vehicles to relieve the pressure.⁶⁵

The wide range of scarcities inevitably resulted in a marked rise in unit costs. In February 1915 the out-door staff claimed a special war bonus to meet the increased cost of living, a pattern followed in subsequent wage claims through the war years. Presumably these payments, as bonuses to meet exceptional circumstances, were technically temporary, but in time they were absorbed into the basic scale and so pushed wages permanently upwards. The rising trend of costs for all commodities during the war years is well known: one particular example will suffice to illustrate what this meant in the case of motor transport.

60 Commercial Motor Vol. 23 (1916) p 420, 424; Board Minutes 29 Nov. 1916 CP 1/5.

61 Commercial Motor Vol. 23 (1916) p 441, Vol. 24 (1916-17) p 77, 151; Vol. 25 (1917) passim. World's Carriers Vol. 13 (1916-17) p 285, 296, 313.

62 Commercial Motor Vol. 23 (1916) p 462, Vol. 25 (1917) p 385, p 430 ff, Vol. 28 (1918-19) p 23.

63 Board Minutes 9 Aug 1916, 12 June 1917 CP 1/5. Immediately following the introduction of petrol rationing 25 motors were taken off and 100 horses put on.

64 Ibid 5, 19 April, 10, 31 May, 26 July 1916 CP 1/5. The position became critical from the spring of 1918. Ibid 27 March, 17, 24 April, 29 May, 23 Oct. 1918 CP 1/6.

65 Ibid, 10, 17 Oct, 19 Dec. 1917; 27 March, 24 April, 1918 CP 1/5.

In 1907 the quoted price of a new Foden steam waggon was £550.⁶⁶ By the spring of 1917 a new vehicle was still available at £600 but then the price soared as petrol and fodder shortages enhanced the competitive position of steam. The price had leapt to £928 by February 1918 and £1200 before the end of the year. By this time the board was willing to spend over £1000 on a second-hand model.⁶⁷ It is quite possible that an important consideration behind the purchase of a small furniture business that year was the inclusion of a steam-waggon in the sale.⁶⁸

Rising unit costs were, however, accompanied by a fall in aggregate costs as the volume of business declined. Behind this overall trend the two major components of total costs, wages and provender, moved in opposite directions. Despite a big reduction in the number of horses employed, there was a marked rise, both relatively and absolutely, in the level of provender costs: so soon as the May of 1915, when the stud had been reduced by 950 horses, feed costs had already risen at a rate of £45,000 per annum.⁶⁹ However the outflow of labour to the Army was sufficiently large to reduce the wages bill, in spite of war bonuses, by an amount which more than off-set the rise in feed costs. But inevitably revenue was also reduced and unfortunately led the downward spiral. During the December half-year 1915 aggregate expenses of the combined business fell by £4152 compared with twelve months previously, but revenue fell even more by £8521.⁷⁰ The gap continued to widen in 1916 - £5000 in March, £7000 in April.⁷¹

66 Minutes Directors' committee 23 Oct 1907 Pic 1/13

67 Minutes, Heavy haulage committee 7 March, 4 April 1917; 20 Feb. 30 Oct, 14 Nov 1918 Pic 1/20. Board Minutes 24 April 1918 CP 1/6.

68 Board Minutes 29 May 1918 CP 1/6; Minutes, Country Traffic committee 28 June 1918 Pic 1/19. The board offered £1150 for the business; the steam waggon was valued at £973.

69 Board Minutes 14 July 1915 CP 1/4. The stated reduction of the stud, by 950 horses is markedly less than the claimed losses consequent upon mobilisation noted above. (Notes 53 and 54). Presumably the balance had been made up by fresh purchases.

70 Ibid 9 Feb. 1916 CP 1/5.

71 Ibid 10 May 14 June 1916 CP 1/5.

Inevitably profit margins collapsed under the pressure. Although the year's accounts for 1915 did not allow an ordinary dividend to be paid, there was still a favourable balance of £13,000 after depreciation and interest charges. But in 1916 a loss of £9000 was incurred, which rose to £20,000 in 1917.⁷² Morale slumped. By November 1916 J.J. Paterson had despaired of any improvement in conditions, especially the shortage of labour, and intimated his willingness to sell off his capital holding in the business at much less than its nominal value if a purchaser could be found.⁷³

Although the effects of shortages and rising prices were felt by all sections of the combined business, the force of their impact varied considerably. Pickfords, having opportunely shed its interests in parcels traffic, managed to escape the worst of the damage. The main brunt of the impact was borne by the Carter Paterson side of the group. From 1 January 1915 all parcels traffic was brought into a single, combined service worked from Goswell road, Carter Paterson's headquarters, and it was on the parcels traffic that all the disruptive effects of the war were most acutely concentrated. The loss of many experienced carmen was critical and together with all the other difficulties of supply and rising costs, seriously undermined the business. But the basic fact was that the parcels traffic simply disintegrated. The following figures indicate the rate and extent of the collapse. By May 1916 the total volume of traffic handled by the joint service was somewhat less than that dealt with by Goswell road

⁷² Ibid 1 Dec. 1915. 25 Oct, 1 Nov. 1916 CP 1/5; 21, 28 Nov, 1917 CP 1/6 The loss reported to the 1917 AGM was £25,000, but that did not allow for a profit of £5,000 forthcoming from Pickfords and Beans Express.

⁷³ Ibid 29 Nov. 1916 CP 1/5.

alone only twelve months previously.⁷⁴

Number of parcels passing through the combined business(000)

	<u>June $\frac{1}{2}$ year</u>	<u>December $\frac{1}{2}$ year</u>	<u>Whole year</u>
1914	approx 14m.	13, 548	27,548
1915	12,163	10,759	22,922
1916	8,606	7,631	16,237
1917	6,331	6,117	12,448
1918			10,293
1919			12,584

Source: the figures for 1914 to 1917 are from Board Minutes 5 June 1918; the figures for 1918 and 1919 are from CP 4/16 Statistics (1887-1927) relating to Carter Paterson & Co.

The range of responses to this situation was necessarily limited. One was simply to adapt to the new circumstances by reducing the frequency of services to all areas and eliminating them in marginal areas. By the spring of 1918 the parcels service had been withdrawn in 120 London and suburban areas, chiefly the outer districts, and 80 Home Counties places.⁷⁵ All parcels work in Birmingham was also abandoned.⁷⁶ There were, however, two further potential lines of action; to increase, if at all possible, the company's share of the declining market and to secure the maximum revenue from whatever portion was retained.

Carter Paterson clearly failed to increase its parcels traffic but the fall would have been immediately more pronounced had the

⁷⁴ Ibid 10 May 1916 CP 1/5.

⁷⁵ Ibid 17 April 1918 CP 1/6. This seems to have been the lowest ebb on the parcels side, since a few months later the number of delivery areas was increased in a successful effort to increase revenue. Ibid 21 Aug, 11 Sept. 1918 CP 1/6.

⁷⁶ Minutes Country Traffic committee 8 Oct, 1915 Pic 1/19.

company's position not been boosted by the purchase of W.&.G. Express in the summer of 1915⁷⁷ The W.&.G. was, by then, anxious to concentrate on its war work for the government and initiated a new round of the negotiations which had been abandoned when war was declared. Previously the terms demanded by the W.&.G. would have obliged Carter Paterson to take over that company's entire premises plant and staff but the deal now proposed withdrew most of these stipulations and virtually offered the business without conditions. Carter Paterson had spare capacity of its own and could have had no interest in acquiring more, but cast in these terms the deal promised a substantial increase in traffic, estimated at 50,000 parcels a week and worth £1000 in revenue, at little additional cost. So the deal went through; W.&.G. was bought and closed down in a matter of weeks and the extra traffic and revenue absorbed into the existing system. The acquisition of W.&.G. no doubt slowed the rate of loss of traffic for a time but it evidently did not halt it. However perhaps the main value of the deal to Carter Paterson was the additional influence in the market which it brought. Although a rates agreement,⁷⁸ similar to that of 1907, existed between Carter Paterson and W.&.G. Express, the latter had remained a potentially major competitor. This threat was now removed.

The fall-off in traffic was due to a number of causes. In part there was an absolute reduction in the volume of traffic as the civilian sector of the war economy shrank. In addition to this some customers economised by bulking several small parcels

⁷⁷ The following is based on Board Minutes 1, 9 Dec. 1914, 2, 16, 24 June, 16 July, 29 Sept, 1915 CP 1/4.

⁷⁸ Ibid 13, 27 Jan, 24 Feb. 10 March 1915 CP 1/4.

into a larger single one (shades of former battles!) and so avoided paying per item. The practice explained a reduction of 20,000 parcels a month from a single firm.⁷⁹ On the other hand the fall-off owed something to the switching of traffic to competing services, to the Post Office in the case of light parcels and the railways for heavy parcels. It is evident that at these upper and lower thresholds, which themselves would vary according to price movements, demand was significantly price elastic. For example in 1915 a penny increase in the parcels post was immediately followed by the return to Carter Paterson of 12,000 parcels a day which had earlier been lost on account of a rates increase. Some of these, however, soon return to the Post Office when Carter Paterson added to its own rates.⁸⁰ Similarly when the company, later on in the war, raised its rates by a substantial margin, it promptly lost to the railways some of its heavy traffic to the London suburbs. The company's position vis-a-vis the railways was not helped by the government policy of subsidising freight rates by goods trains and thus maintaining them at an artificially low level. Indeed it found that the railway's competition extended to even light parcels.⁸¹

The board was therefore faced with something of a dilemma in formulating its pricing policy and displayed a sense of insecurity by consciously choosing to avoid increases which might cause offence to customers,⁸² and thus lose traffic. Consequently rate increases tended to be delayed until they were absolutely necessary, were disguised as a war levy, and were usually no more than the minimum.

79. Ibid 8 March 1916, CP 1/5. The tactic was to divert such traffic from the parcels service to Pickfords heavy cartage service. Accordingly the Heavy Haulage committee was asked to keep watch for such cases and when any were detected the higher parcels rate, not the tonnage rate, was to be charged. (Minutes 17 Nov 1915 Pic 1/20). The parallel with Pickfords & Co v. Grand Junction railway company is singularly ironic.

80. Board Minutes 13 Oct. 1915 CP 1/4; Minutes Heavy Haulage committee 12 Jan 1916 Pic 1/20.

81. Board Minutes 16, 23 Jan, 17 July 1918 CP 1/6; Minutes Heavy Haulage committee, 6 Feb 1918 Pic 1/20.

82. Directors' report to AGM 1 Nov. 1916 CP 1/5.

necessary to cover commitments at current costs and levels of traffic. As a result such increases were invariably eroded within three or four months by a further rise in costs and fall in traffic.⁸³ Not until the end of 1917, when the company's financial position was getting desperate, did the board break out of the vicious circle by raising its rates sufficiently to put the business on its feet again. Even then it only acted with the advice and support of the Board of Trade.⁸⁴ Inevitably some traffic was lost to the railways but not enough to prevent the small profit of £3194 for the December half-year 1917, itself the first profit on the parcels business for two years, from being boosted to £30,304 in the June half-year 1918.⁸⁵ Concern about the future was at last allayed. Not all companies were so fortunate; Globe Parcels Express, for example, went to the wall.⁸⁶

Pickfords withdrew from parcels work but continued its other varied activities, on which the impact of the war differed in effect. The ticket and travel business, not surprisingly, was badly hit. The outbreak of war immediately put an end to the autumn travel programme for 1914 and all plans lapsed for the duration of the war. Home travel similarly fell and ticket sales slumped.⁸⁷ Pickfords' provincial traffic also came under heavy pressure as the whole range of shortages and rising costs took their toll. An estimate made at the beginning of 1916 suggested that less than half the provincial agencies as measured by the total capital employed, would yield the desired return on capital of 15% while almost a quarter would show no or very little profit.⁸⁸ Since the estimate did not allow for the

83 For example, rates were increased in March, Aug, and Nov. in 1915 and on each occasion the potential net addition to revenue failed to materialise because of further traffic falls and increased expenditure.

84 Board Minutes 21, 28 Nov. 1917 CP 1/6.

85 Ibid, 28, 30 Aug. 1918 CP 1/6.

86 Ibid 10 April, 1918 CP 1/6; the Liverpool Parcels Delivery Co., founded in 1866, was also obliged to close down at least for the duration of the war. World's Carriers Vol. 15 (1918-19) p 14 (Oct. 1918).

87 Minutes, Country Traffic committee 8 Oct. 1915, 11 Feb, 7 April, 1916. Pic 1/19.

88 Ibid 14 Jan 1916 Pic 1/19.

further deterioration in labour supply, it is unlikely that even these results were achieved. Some of the marginal agencies had already been closed, at least temporarily, and others were subsequently added to the list.

However other sections of the business were stimulated by the war. Household removals and storage, which had previously existed on a rather ad hoc basis, developed a new importance in both London and the provinces. Extra warehouse space was acquired and a couple of small firms were bought; the basis was laid for a major expansion into this category of business in the post-war years.⁸⁹ Traffic at Pickfords' wharf boomed. Profits rose from £700 for the December half-year 1914 to almost £3,500 for the same period in 1917, a substantial real increase even allowing for the decline in the value of money.⁹⁰ The goods handled were mainly foodstuffs - flour, cheese and especially canned goods. Pickfords acted as distribution agent for Libby's and other firms. Bulk consignments were received at the wharf and then broken down into delivery lots. This class of business was especially valuable because Pickfords received commission from re-labelling and re-packaging the goods, revenue from warehousing dues, and employment for its heavy cartage teams.⁹¹

The motor department, now under the immediate management of Mr. W. Elliot, who became Pickfords' general manager a few years later, also benefitted from war demand. It is not clear exactly when Pickfords began doing contract work for the government,⁹² but the connection was valuable in both a strategic and economic sense.

89 Ibid passim; also The Driving Mirror Vol. No. 4 Christmas 1947 p 6, History of Pickfords' removal department.

90 Ibid 14 Jan 1916, 25 Jan 1918 Pic 1/19.

91 Ibid 7 Sept, 19 Oct. 1917 12 July, 1918 Pic 1/19.

92 The first clear indication comes in December 1915 but it might have started earlier than that. This section is based on Minutes, Heavy Haulage committee passim (1915-1918 inclusive)

The transportation of aircraft frames qualified Pickfords for the assistance of the Ministry of Munitions. Exemption badges were received for fitters and drivers directly employed in this way, and certificates for the purchase of motors and extra supplies of petrol when it was rationed. Overall Pickfords would seem to have come out of the war quite well. In 1916 and 1917, when the joint business as a whole was sliding further and further into deficit, Pickfords managed to show a small profit (Table 12.2)

The fortunes of the group as a whole had begun to pick up before the war ended, while the armistice was followed by even firmer recovery. Profits revived steadily, so that in September 1919 the directors could inform the shareholders that the back-log of deficits, preferred charges and interest had been eliminated and that, for the first time since 1914, a dividend, four per cent, could be paid on the ordinary shares.⁹³ The successful rates increase at the beginning of 1918 had restored the board's self-confidence and immediately upon the armistice plans were laid to return the business to its pre-war position. A major expansion of motor transport was seen as the key element in the recovery programme for all sides of the business, parcels, provincial traffic, removals and heavy haulage alike.⁹⁴ Daily motor delivery services would be extended to places far beyond the pre-war limits of the Home Counties districts; the possibility of trunking direct to the provinces by road instead of rail was also raised.⁹⁵ Consequently old stock was cleared out and large orders placed with Napiers,

93 Directors' report to AGM 30 Sept. 1919 CP 1/7.

94 Board Minutes 27 Nov, 4 Dec. 1918 CP 1/6; Minutes County Traffic committee 17, 31 Jan, 28 Feb, 28 March 1919; Minutes Heavy Haulage committee 16 Jan 1919.

95 Board Minutes 30 July, 13 Aug, 3 Dec. 1919 CP 1/7.

Leylands and Tilling-Stevens for new petrol motors. Pickfords' travel interests were also immediately revived and one or two novel features introduced - weekend or week-long char-a-banc tours of the West Country, South Wales and the Lakes, and a ticket-agency for "Mr. Handley Page's air trips."⁹⁶

All of this required a heavy capital outlay but the group's recovered prosperity gave every hope that the finance would be forthcoming without too much strain. Nonetheless the board's decision to proceed with caution was wise,⁹⁷ since the future structure of the transport industry was very uncertain in the immediate post-war years.⁹⁸ The government's declared aim was to promote cheap transport and although to some this meant nationalisation of the railways what mattered to Carter Paterson was whether or not the government's war-time subsidy of freight rates was to be continued. The directors therefore approached the Board of Trade for clarification,⁹⁹ on the grounds that considerable capital spending was liable to be put at risk; no private firm could match the force of state-aided competition. However to cover such an emergency the board put forward a scheme, in the time honoured method of dealing with undefeatable opponents, by which Carter Paterson's facilities would be merged with those of the railway companies' and the Post Office so as to provide the public with a cheap and comprehensive parcels delivery service. Although this episode was not couched exactly in the terms of the 'road versus rail' debate of the inter-war years, the basic issue was already on the agenda.

96 Minutes, Country Traffic committee 29 Nov, 1918; March 14, May 19, 1919 Pic 1/19.

97 Board Minutes 13 Aug. 1919 CP 1/7

98 Dyos & Aldcroft British transport p 290 ff

99 The following is based on a Memorandum presented to Sir William Marwood, Board of Trade 20.1.1919. CP 4/33. Discussions were also held with Sir H. Walker, chairman of the Railway Executive, and also with Sir P. Nash and Sir Eric Geddes to discover the intentions of the forthcoming Ministry of Transport.

From Pickfords' point of view, however, more important discussions were taking place elsewhere, for by the spring of 1919 negotiations were under way which resulted in the firm being sold to the Hays Wharf Cartage company, a subsidiary of the Proprietors of Hays Wharf.¹⁰⁰ Hays Wharf's main point of contact was on the heavy cartage side but its bid was for the whole of Pickfords' interests which had not yet been absorbed into Carter Paterson. The fact that Pickfords could be detached without disrupting the rest of the group demonstrates how limited, on account of the war, the degree of integration other than for parcels had been.

The negotiations ran through the whole range of possibilities as the joint-board tried to interest Hays Wharf in a merger embracing the whole group or the joint flotation of a public company. But Hays Wharf was interested only in a cash and shares offer for Pickfords and on these terms the deal was finally settled at a purchase price of £371,881.6.10d. L.H.Baxendale, N.O.Walker, and J.Paterson, in preference to the protesting G.V.Baxendale, joined the board of Hays Wharf Cartage Company.¹⁰¹ Walker resigned from Carter Paterson and J.J.Paterson and H.R.Paterson resigned from Pickfords. L.H.Baxendale, G.V.Baxendale, J. Paterson and O.Day continued as directors of Pickfords but L.H.Baxendale resigned as chairman in favour of Major O.C. Magniac of Hays Wharf.¹⁰² Baxendale continued as chairman of Carter Paterson and for the future

100 A.Ellis Three hundred years on London river. The Hay's Wharf story 1651-1951 (1952) p 109. The discussion of the negotiations is based on Board Minutes 9 April, 4, 18 June, 2, 16 July, 24 Sept. 5. Nov, 10 Dec. 1919 CP 1/7; also correspondence and papers concerning the sale Pic HH; Board Minutes 9 Jan 1920, Pic 1/9.

101 Board Minutes 5 Nov. 1919 CP 1/7.

102 Ibid 14 Jan, 1920 CP 1/7; Board Minutes 14, 20 Jan, 4 Aug 1920 Pic 1/9.

concentrated his business activities on that concern.

So the links between the Baxendale family and Pickfords, initiated in 1817, weakened further. Pickfords had already passed out of the family's control in 1912 and now it was no longer even headed by a member of the family. Thus the position remained until 1933 when Pickfords passed into new ownership, that of the four main line railway companies. Baxendale's resignation from the board finalised the end of an era in Pickford's history.

CHAPTER 13

CONCLUSION

During the 170 years of Pickfords' history examined here, there were three radical breaks in the technology of transportation. The construction of canals from the mid-eighteenth century, the advent of the steam locomotive in the 1820s, and the introduction of motor transport in the twentieth century, all three developments had a fundamental impact on the structure of transport services. This effect was most forcibly felt in the case of railways and motors. Canal conveyance essentially added a new dimension and scale to the pre-existing transport system, whereas the innovation of both railways and motors resulted in a clash of interests between rival transport forms. For a firm to survive over a lengthy period of years and, in the meantime, absorb the innovation of successive new technologies, suggests a high degree of sustained enterprise. To be the sole survivor of a cluster of firms in the mid-eighteenth century suggests that its experience was in some ways exceptional. Yet this was Pickfords' achievement. What reasons and conditions lay behind it?

(1756-1817) The payments' and financial crisis of 1815-1817, resulting in the introduction of new partners to the business from outside of the family and the early loss of control to them, marks a major break in Pickfords' development. During the preceeding years since James Pickfords' first known activities as a Manchester to London waggoner, the conditions within which Pickfords operated had been transformed.

From about the middle of the eighteenth century the British economy began to undergo that process of change which, with the

innovation of new technologies and methods of production, has since been characterised as the Industrial Revolution. The growth of modern industry, involving much bigger units of production and rapidly rising levels of aggregate output, inevitably resulted in a vastly increased demand for transport services. Greatly increased quantities of raw materials had to be conveyed to the centres of production and manufactured goods to domestic and export markets. Pressure from this source stimulated the improvement of existing means of conveyance and the innovation of an entirely new form of transportation.

The application of new methods of organisation and technique significantly raised the efficiency of road transport. The supply of road transport services grew in volume and regularity and by the early years of the nineteenth century the condition of the roads has been so far improved that goods could be conveyed in special light-weight vehicles and at faster speeds than had ever been known before. The demand for transport services was, however, so strong that an altogether new technology, that of canal conveyance, was required to meet it. Canals in their turn promoted further growth in the economy.

The industrialisation and growth of the British economy, and the consequent increased volume of traffic to be transported, provided the conditions for the development of firms whose business was the supply of transport services. By 1750 the structure of the inland carrying trade, including that of the long-distance trade, was already well formed and from about 1770 the number of carrying concerns rapidly increased. Expansion in the carrying trade was accompanied by specialisation, as the carrier ceased to convey passengers and concentrated his attentions solely on the business of goods traffic. The construction of canals positively promoted the carrier's business, that of the long distance carrier in

particular. Because of a fear of monopoly, the companies who owned and built the canals were prohibited from engaging in the carrying of goods over them. Canal conveyance, therefore, offered a major opportunity to those with the enterprise to exploit it.

Between 1756 and 1817 Pickfords was transformed from a small road haulage concern, operating a handful of waggons between Manchester and London, to one which provided road and canal transport services on a substantial scale over a considerable part of the country. Expansion in the volume and range of Pickfords' services was accompanied by the acquisition of permanent premises in London and Manchester, by the lease of wharfs and warehouses from several canal companies, the purchase of a sizeable road haulage business in Leicester and the extension of its canal services to Birmingham.

For the first twenty years there was no significant change in the scale or character of Pickfords' business; that came from the later 1770s when Matthew Pickford was in control of the firm. In common with the other carriers in Manchester, Pickfords' road services to and from London were increased from two a week to a daily service (excluding Sundays). Services were introduced on other routes and, after Matthew Pickfords' death, the specialised fly-van service added a significant extension to the firms range of road haulage facilities. It was also during Matthew Pickfords' life time that Pickfords' interests were extended to include canal conveyance, a line of business which his successors in the family concern actively promoted. By 1817 Pickfords operated over most of the major canals between London and Lancashire and had emerged as one of the leading firms of canal carriers in the country.

Although this phase of Pickfords' development ended in crisis, there were certain features which marked Pickfords out from others in the trade. Already at the time of Matthew Pickford's death

in 1799, Pickfords was one of only two carrying firms in Manchester which traded to and from London to survive from James Pickford's time. Pickfords thus possessed a degree of durability which most other firms lacked. Another feature which differentiated Pickfords from others in the London trade was its use of canals. Whereas other road carriers did not adopt canal conveyance until after 1800, it had become an integral part of Pickfords' services for several years prior to Matthew Pickford's death.

It is impossible to define to any significant extent Matthew Pickfords' personal contribution to the family firm. Continuity from his father and mother and a life-long concern with the business are the minimum, and of importance in themselves. His interest in the coaching trade and the timing of his adoption of canal conveyance suggest a degree of energy and enterprise, but as so little is known about Matthew Pickford, it is difficult to be any more specific. Possibly he imparted a certain momentum to business which survived his death for a time, but which his successors were unable to maintain.

After Matthew Pickford's death, Pickfords continued to expand both by land and water. The purchase of Clarke's waggons in Leicester added a new dimension to the road haulage side of the business, and new canal services were started from Birmingham and Derby to London, and between Birmingham and Leicester. Enterprise was apparently not absent, but as the volume of traffic and scale of organisation increased, so greater demands would be made of those who controlled the business. The chief requirements would be those of character - initiative, but also energy, close attention to business, and above all, the ability to dominate an extended organisation. The relationship between the success or failure of an enterprise and the life and death of a dominant founder or personality remained a prominent feature of business

in the early nineteenth century.¹ Individuals rather than institutions determined continuity, but a business temperament was not necessarily handed on from father to son. It is impossible to say whether the third generation of Pickfords lacked the ability or the will to continue the business. What is clear is that Pickfords' revival was based on the new blood taken into the partnership in 1817 and in particular on the energies and forceful personality of one of the new partners, Joseph Baxendale.

(1817-1847) The economic depression which followed the conclusion of the French wars and the accompanying decline in the canal trade no doubt helps to explain the timing of Pickfords' crisis in 1817. Dull conditions still prevailed when the partnership was reformed by the inclusion of Langton, Inman and Baxendale, and general economic recovery was delayed until about 1820. There then followed some fifteen years of strong, if erratic, economic advance, but in the later 1830s trade began to weaken and severe depression returned during the first years of the 1840s. Subsequent recovery was interrupted by the financial crisis of 1846-7, but then strengthened into a long period of sustained expansion.

During the fifteen or so years after 1817, road and canal transport reached their peak of development. Although the challenge of steam-power began to attract attention from about 1825, the steam engine was not then seen as the threat it ultimately became. Efforts to adopt the new technology to the needs of canal conveyance were not successful. Instead it took the form of the steam locomotive, the powerful competition of which had by 1840 brought

1 B. Supple 'The great capitalist man-hunt. A review article.' Business History Vol. VI (1963-4) esp p 55. See also S.G. Checkland's review of D.C. Coleman Courtaulds, Economic History Review Vol. XXIII (1970) pp 556-560.

severe disruption to the existing pattern of transport services.

For most of these years Pickfords benefitted from the stimulus of continued economic growth and the stability of transport technology. Joseph Baxendale brought firm guidance and leadership, and with the improvement of trade Pickfords recovered and prospered. The waggon service between London and Manchester was continued, and new services started to several towns from Sheffield and Manchester. Additional fly-vans were introduced, to give a network of vans between London and Manchester, Liverpool and Sheffield. Canal conveyance similarly advanced. A new and major canal headquarters was built at City road basin when the Regents canal was opened in 1820. The fleet of canal boats was completely overhauled and increased in number. By the mid-1830s the canal 'fly-trade' was dominated by a handful of firms, Bache, Kenworthy, Crowley, Robins, Shipton, all of which operated on a national basis, but Pickfords was widely recognised as the biggest and most important of them.

The advent of railways changed this position entirely. The canal carriers' control of the inland transportation of merchandise traffic owed much to the prohibition which prevented canal companies from also acting as carrying concerns. The carriers' position, therefore, depended as much on legal as economic considerations. The original intention of applying the same terms of public access to the railways as already existed in respect of roads and canals turned out to be unworkable. This outcome was of critical importance for the carriers. The protection which the law had previously conferred on them was removed. The railway companies emerged as direct competitors for the merchandise trade which also controlled the necessary means of conveyance. Once the railway companies added to their other functions that of public carrier, the existing carriers had of necessity to give way to them.

Pickfords' experience illustrates the point. From the late 1830s railway transportation was adopted as canal conveyance had been previously. A large railway headquarters was built at Camden Town and traffic was conveyed by rail over a wide area of the country. But Pickfords met resistance from the Grand Junction railway company which controlled direct access to Liverpool. The Grand Junction company was determined to retain control of all aspects of its enterprise and showed a particular hostility to the carriers. Pickfords' main response, while maintaining its competition through the use of other railway routes and the canals, was to seek a legal remedy. This took the form of Pickfords' court action against the Grand Junction railway company and Baxendale's attempt to persuade the 1844 select committee of Parliament to prohibit railway companies from acting as carriers beyond the limits of their own lines. When both of these efforts failed, and the London & Birmingham railway company's open policy was reversed following the creation of the London & North Western railway company in 1846, Pickfords had no alternative but to recognise that its days as an independent carrier were over.

As the leading canal carrier, and with extensive custom in London, Liverpool and Manchester, Pickfords had much to offer the LNWR - which itself was the largest railway company. As agents to the LNWR, Pickfords lost its former independence but made significant gains. Above all its continued existence as a transport firm was ensured; most of the other canal carriers disappeared. In addition, Pickfords retained its national framework of operations and although the terms on which its agency work was carried out were strictly controlled by the railway company, the firm was not totally dominated. Much of its former identity was maintained, so that even at the end of the nineteenth century many firms still consigned 'by Pickford' rather than by the LNWR.

(1847-1901) In the long term, the advent of railways posed the biggest single threat to Pickfords' survival. But Pickfords turned the threat by becoming, as agent to the LNWR, an integral part of the railway system. Having achieved this position, there was no reason for Pickfords to be dislodged. The long boom of the third quarter of the nineteenth century further stimulated the demand for transport services and since it was railways which primarily met the demand, Pickfords would also benefit. By the mid-1870s, when the boom ended, the change in the composition of railway traffic, i.e. the frequent dispatch of individually small consignments instead of occasional and large consignments, together with the expansion of urban cartage, especially in the London area, ensured that stock was not left idle. As transport technology remained stable until the end of the century, the structure of the transport industry was undisturbed.

In these conditions Pickfords was more likely to continue than fail. As long as Pickfords remained agent to the LNWR, it was effectively beyond the threat of competition in a substantial part of its business. Its only potential competitor was its co-agent Chaplin & Horne; when that firm was wound up in 1877, Pickfords was left unchallenged. Pickfords thus became part of the institutional structure of the railway industry. The business could be left to take care of itself, as Joseph Baxendale complained in the 1860s, without coming to serious harm. Pickfords' demise was most likely to occur as the result of a deliberate act: the LNWR, for example, might decide not to renew the agency or decide to take over its agent's business, as it did that of Chaplin & Horne. Neither of these conditions would have immediately destroyed Pickfords as it had other interests than its agency work, but it would have been seriously embarrassed, as later events showed. On Pickfords' side, there was little likelihood at this

stage, that the agency contract would be deliberately abandoned. The sale of the business, which was actually under consideration in 1870, would have been the most likely end. But none of these possibilities materialised.

However, if there was no threat to survival there were opportunities to be exploited, especially in the London area. The growth of London's suburbs stimulated an extension of urban cartage both for parcels traffic and also railway work beyond the area of free collection and delivery. A number of new and vigorous concerns appeared to exploit the trade, such as Carter Paterson, and competition was keen. Pickfords claimed its portion of business, and by 1880 was sharing a position of leadership in the London parcels trade with Carter Paterson. During the 1870s and 1880s Pickfords added a number of other activities, including household removals and a small shipping interest to and from the Isle of Wight. By the end of the nineteenth century therefore, Pickfords had developed into a firm with general transport interests among which agency work for the LNWR, although by far the most valuable, was one of several lines of business.

(1901-1920) Pickfords' development during the first two decades of the twentieth century was affected by a wide range of influences. Economic conditions were generally less favourable than they had been. Periodic trade recessions took their toll in reduced profits and increased industrial strife and the severe run down of the civilian economy following the outbreak of war, as illustrated by the collapse of the parcels trade, added further difficulties. Conditions were rendered even more unstable by a new advance in technology, with the advent of motor transport.

A major effect of motor transport was to enable road haulage to compete with railways and so offered transport firms the long-term prospect of less dependence on railways and railway companies. In this, motor transport was in many ways adding a new dimension to an existing situation. Horse transport in the urban areas was mainly complementary to railways but in London there was also an element of competition. Up to a distance of about ten miles parcels firms could deliver 'shop goods'² and other parcels traffic more quickly and cheaply by horse transport than if the same goods were sent part way by rail. By progressively extending the distance and range of traffic over which road transport could compete with rail, motor transport widened the scope for this kind of business. So issues of 'road versus rail' reached the agenda for discussion, but were not the subject of a full debate until after 1920.

Motor transport was destabilising for firms like Pickfords in other ways. Steam vehicles, which were essentially a new variant of an old technology, soon reached technical maturity. But petrol motors, an entirely new technology, underwent substantial technical development within the first few years of their introduction; the rate of obsolescence of early models was high. A premature conversion to motor transport, petrol vehicles in particular, could have been equally as damaging as the failure to innovate quickly enough. In so far as motors, irrespective of type, lowered costs and so made possible lower rates to the public,

2 'Shop goods' were the orders placed by suburban retail shopkeepers with London wholesale firms, and which were delivered by the parcels firms in preference to the railways. See evidence of Mr. J.F.S. Gooday, general manager of the Great Eastern railway company, R.C. on London Traffic Vol. II (Cd. 2751) 1905 Q.18552 ff; see also Pratt Railways and their rates pp 98-9.

the pressure on other firms to follow suite sharpened the edge of competition.

Pickfords' adoption of motors was cautious, the guiding principle being that of comparative cost. Motors were introduced where they could perform existing work more cheaply than horses or could earn additional revenue by tapping sources of traffic which were closed to horses. Pickfords' main use of motors up to 1920, therefore, was for the haulage of heavy loads, for example parcels transfer traffic or aircraft frames, or, as in the new service to the outer London suburbs, where relatively long distances were involved.

Both economic and technical factors affected the pattern of Pickfords' development from the beginning of the present century, but probably the most immediate and most important single influence was the disastrous decision to abandon the agency contract with the LNWR. Two main results followed. Pickfords lost a valuable income which it could ill afford to let go and J.W.Baxendale withdrew from the partnership and took most of his capital with him. So at a time when resources were needed to finance the purchase of motors and profit margins in the London parcels trade were being squeezed by sharp rates competition, Pickfords was under-capitalised and had suffered a marked reduction in its earning power. Efforts to discover new sources of revenue met with only modest success. So for a third time in its history, Pickfords faced a crisis. This time the crisis was averted by an amalgamation, in 1912, with its leading competitors in the London parcels trade. Although difficult times were still to come, especially during the war years, Pickfords' continued existence had once again been ensured.

Three main reasons would seem to account for Pickfords' success and continued existence in 1920. First, Pickfords showed a consistent record of positive and enterprising response to changes in transportation technology. Canals, railways, motors were all adopted readily but judiciously. Secondly, at an important phase of its development, Pickfords had the good fortune to come under the direction of Baxendale, a man of high entrepreneurial ability. Finally, on three separate occasions, successful solutions were found to conditions of crisis.

Because of its unique survival, Pickfords is necessarily not typical of other transport concerns. At each stage of its history, however, Pickfords' experience essentially reflected developments in transportation which were general in character. The expansion of road haulage services in the later eighteenth century, the growth of the canal 'fly-trade' to its peak in the 1820s and 1830s, the development of the London parcels trade in the later nineteenth century, none of these were confined to Pickfords. Pickfords participated in them to considerable effect but their explanation lies in the general condition of the contemporary economy and technology. The particular interest of Pickfords' history is that it illustrates in a single, continuous experience the impact of changing modes of transportation over a time period of more than 150 years. The transition from one mode to another invariably raised difficulties. Pickfords alone found a satisfactory solution to all of them.

APPENDIX L.

THE ORIGINS OF PICKFORDS

It has proved impossible to find concrete support from the surviving evidence for the tradition of seventeenth century origins. The only direct reference to this tradition in Pickfords' records occurs in January 1908 when the directors approved "the idea of stating 'Established 300 years' on all our Ticket advertisements."¹ There is nothing in the Pickford or Baxendale family papers which casts any light on this matter.

There is no doubt that the directors decision was based on a current belief that Pickfords' origins reached back to the early seventeenth century. A description of Pickfords published in a new trade journal in October 1904 clearly presumed such origins.² The same belief would seem to underpin the brief account of Pickfords included in one of C.G.Harper's books published at the beginning of the present century. Harper acknowledged the assistance of J.W.Baxendale, then the senior member of the firm, and presumably derived his information from him.³ In Harper's account the Pickfords entered the carrying trade, by purchase or otherwise, about 1730, having acquired a pack-horse business which in turn was said to date from the early seventeenth century. In view of the following discussion it is noteworthy that on this basis the Pickfords direct participation in the carrying trade would date from towards the mid-eighteenth century. Sherrington⁴ followed Harper's account, but neither author cites any supporting evidence.

1 Minutes: Directors committee 8 Jan 1908 Pic 1/14.

2 The World's Carriers Vol. 1, 15 Oct., 1904 p 9.

3 C.G.Harper, Stage coach and mail in days of yore (1903): Vol. II, Chapter V 'A great carrying firm: the story of Pickford and Co. pp 123-143. In the preface to Vol. 1 Harper acknowledges the assistance of Mr. Joseph Baxendale for his section on Pickfords; also C.G.Harper The Manchester and Glasgow road (Manchester and London 1907, 2nd revised edition 1924) pp 228-9.

4 C.E.R.Sherrington, A hundred years of inland transport (1934) p 37.

The official statement of Pickfords' traditional origins is to be found in the brief company history Transport Saga 1646-1947.⁵ There the starting point of 1646 is adopted basically on the grounds that the State Papers at that date contain references to a Thomas Pickford of Adlington, Cheshire, the village where James Pickford himself originally lived. This Thomas Pickford, yeoman, was one of several persons in that area whose lands were sequestered on account of Royalist sympathies. The documents concerned have been published elsewhere but do not indicate Pickford's offence.⁶ The author's suggestion that Pickford has perhaps been supplying the Royalists with horses and thus possibly already connected with the carrying trade is thus purely fictional.

The Pickford business is assumed to have been, some years later, that of contracting for the carriage of stone for road building in the area of the Cheshire-Derbyshire border. This supposedly led into general carrying locally in the Macclesfield area, followed first by extension to Manchester, and then, with James to London. Again this is supposition, for which no supporting evidence can be found. The scale of activity suggested could only be explained in terms of turnpiking, yet no roads in Macclesfield district were turnpiked before 1756.⁷ Similarly there is no evidence of any carrying activities in Manchester prior to this same date.

5 Transport saga 1646-1947 (printed privately 1947). The first chapter attempts to derive the firm's history before 1756.

6 J.P.Earwaker, East Cheshire past and present (1877) Vol. 1 pp 23-6, Vol. II p 232.

7 G.Ormerod, The history of the county palatine and city of Chester (1819) Vol. 1 pp 38-9.

F. Renaud, Contributions towards a history of the ancient parish of Prestbury, in Cheshire, (Chetham Society Publications, 1876 Vol. 97) p 105.

7 R.W.Lloyd-Jones An economic and social history of Macclesfield 1700-1850 (Manchester University M.A.Thesis, 1954, deposited in Macclesfield Public Library), Appendix, Map 6; also W.Harrison 'The development of the turnpike system in Lancashire and Cheshire' Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society Vol. IV (1886) pp 80-92, esp. the accompanying map. The only turnpiking vaguely in that area was the Manchester-Buxton road, under an Act of 1724.

The manorial records of Manchester mention James' son Matthew in 1768⁸ but nothing else. Other local records including turnpike records, poor rates, church leys and other assessed taxes throughout the eighteenth century, contain no clear reference to Pickfords' carrying business before 1794.⁹ Much the same is true of London. Thomas Le Laune¹⁰ published the names of London carriers in the late seventeenth century, but the name of Pickford was not among them. The Pickfords leased property in London in their own right only in 1794 and so do not appear in the City of London records until then.¹¹ All the evidence which has been examined has produced either negative or inconclusive results. Although the traditional picture of Pickfords' first beginnings may well have some truth in it, no positive evidence has yet been discovered to identify it.

Had James Pickford not died intestate this whole difficulty would not have arisen. The absence of a will has left a gap which it has proved very difficult to fill. It is not known with any certainty who James' parents were and especially whether or not he inherited his stage-waggon. Direct evidence is absent, but circumstantial evidence offers some hopes.

In July 1741 the death occurred of Matthew Pickford the Elder of Adlington. Since his will is registered and the contents known, it would become valuable evidence if it could be demonstrated that this was James Pickford's father. Clearly full proof is impossible but it is the writer's belief that such a relationship is more

8 J.P.Earwaker (ed) The constables' accounts of the manor of Manchester (1891-2) Vol. 3, p 176; also J.P.Earwaker (ed) Manchester Court-Leet records (1888)

9 Church Leys 1706, 1709, 1711, 1715, 1714.
Poor Rates 1733-4, 1736-9, 1743, 1750, 1752-3, 1756, 1770, 1794
Lamp Tax 1765, Police Tax 1770-1. Manchester & Wilmslow Trust;
Manchester and Rusholme Trust - various books of Deeds and Accounts.

10 Thomas De Laune The present state of London (1681) Angliae Metropolis or the present state of London (1690)

11 E.Halfpenny 'Pickfords'; expansion and crisis in the early nineteenth century.' Business History Vol. 1 No. 2 (1959) p 117.

likely than not. The following discussion is based on the internal evidence of five wills,¹² details of which are attached together with the likely family pedigree. Internal evidence of three wills, those of Matthew Pickford the Elder of Adlington, James Pickford of Lostock Within Poynton, and John Pickford of Adlington supports the relationship plotted above the line of the accompanying pedigree. The genealogy of the Pickfords, carriers, from James and Martha on is firmly established. The task is to combine the two sections.

The starting point, and strongest evidence, must be the will of James' widow, Martha Pickford. She names as her executors her son Matthew and 'my friend Henry Richardson of Norbury, Cheshire.' This is almost certainly the same Henry Richardson who appears as executor to both Matthew Pickford the Elder and his son John. Firmly established above the line, he may therefore be a means of linking the two sides.

What was Martha's connection with Richardson? There are several possibilities. He might have been a friend of Martha's own family, of whom nothing is known but their name, Johnson. Richardson then becomes a mutual friend of the Johnson and the Pickford family of Matthew the Elder. Martha married a Pickford called James - the son of this family, or of a quite different family of Pickfords living in the same small area?

Alternatively, Martha might have known Richardson through her husband. In this case there are two chief possibilities. Richardson is a mutual friend of two families of Pickfords, whose relationship to each other cannot be determined. Martha's

12 This following is based on the transcription of wills taken by the late the Hon. Mary Pickford. These are at K.S./3/1.

friendship with Richardson then need not imply any connection with Matthew Pickford the Elder. The favourable assumption would be that Martha's husband through whom the contact was made was ^{also} the son of Matthew Pickford the Elder. On this analysis, Richardson's association is less elusive, and in the circumstances of James' death, quite natural. Martha has turned to a friend of her husband's family, who has performed a like service for her father-in-law and brother-in-law. This explanation would involve no stretching of the evidence.

What other support can be found? A second possible linkage derives from the will of James' son Matthew. Named as one of his executors is his brother-in-law, Matthew Priestnall of Stockport, Liquor Merchant. Now Priestnall is a family name already well established by marriage with the Pickfords above the line. Although no direct evidence links Matthew with these other Priestnalls, it can be shown he was acquainted with another family of Pickfords. A notice appeared in the Manchester Mercury, 13 June 1786, stating that a John Pickford of Stockport, Innkeeper, had assigned his estates and effects to Richard Harrison, of Salford, Timber Merchant, Matthew Priestnall of Stockport, Liquor Merchant, and Matthew Pickford of Stockport, Innkeeper. The repetition of exactly the same designation makes it highly probable that the same Matthew Priestnall is involved. Is this another and most interesting coincidence, and the two sets of Pickfords only loosely, if at all related? If the John and Matthew Pickford referred to here can be identified as the two elder sons of John Pickford of

Adlington, a favourable interpretation would make Priestnall the husband of one of their cousins. He would thus be a suitable person to act in what was probably a bankruptcy. A similar pattern to the Richardson connection emerges, and a simple interpretation of both of them would point in the same direction.

The background evidence to the foregoing discussion also suggests a further consideration; that is the remarkable number of references which recur to the timber trade. The third executor named in the will of Matthew Pickford (carrier) was John Barber of Liverpool, Timber Merchant. Matthew Pickford the Elder was a timber merchant, and in fact his will is devoted almost entirely to the disposal of his timber yards in Manchester. A notice in the name of the three executors of his will in the Manchester Magazine, 27 July 1742, advertised their sale. Some years later, one of the assignees of John Pickford of Stockport, Innkeeper, was also engaged in the timber trade, and it is possible that John Pickford of Adlington might have had indirect links with the same trade. The Manchester Mercury, 6 August 1776, carried a notice of the sale of the property and inheritance of a John Pickford the tenant of one of the properties in Great Turner street. Reference to the first Manchester Directory of 1772 shows that Thomas Pickford of Great Turner^s street was a timber merchant. The sale was advertised in August 1776: John Pickford of Adlington had died in September 1774. Were they the same person? Possibly.

The reference to Thomas Pickford of Great Turner street contains a further interesting feature. In the next Directory of 1781 no

Thomas Pickford appears in the general classification. But in that same issue, under the heading of carriers' services, Matthew Pickford's entry includes the information that the Book-keeper for the waggons in London is Thomas Pickford. This will have been Matthew's younger brother who is known from other sources to have been in London by 1781. He joined with Matthew, and looked after the London end of the business. Are the two items connected, suggesting that Thomas dabbled in timber before going in with his brother? Over a number of years, there are several hints of some type of family connection with the timber trade. There would be immediate points of contact between this trade and a carrier's business.

There are two other possible clues. The first two generations of the Pickfords, carriers, that is James and Martha, and their son Matthew, are buried in Prestbury Churchyard very close to the graves of Matthew Pickford the Elder, and his son John. Finally, of the five wills drawn on here, four are made within a few months of the death of the person concerned. The exception is John Pickford of Adlington, whose will is dated six years before his death. He might well have been seriously ill, but it is interesting to note that it was made within a month of the death of James Pickford (carrier) intestate.

No item of evidence presented here individually carries much weight; taken together, however, some type of pattern seems to emerge. At worst, they remain a series of coincidences which might or might not suggest some relationship. Making a number of favourable assumptions, however, some foundation can be found to support the suggestion that Matthew Pickford the Elder was indeed the father of James Pickford, carrier.

There is, in fact, one reference to James Pickford before 1756, but not as a carrier. A surviving indenture¹³ dated 25 March, 1788, records an alteration in the terms on which James' son Matthew held some land from Sir George Warren of Poynton, lord of the manor and chief landowner in the area. Two properties were involved, one which Matthew held in his own right, and a second which he had inherited. The agreement of 1788 referred back to the terms of the original lease of this latter property, showing that it has been drawn in January 1747. The property concerned had been made over to 'James Pickford of Adlington, Farmer.' There is no hint that the land so leased by James was to be used for any purposes other than farming. If he was engaged in carrying at all, at that time, it can have been no more than a subsidiary interest.

To conclude, no evidence has been found to substantiate Pickfords' existence before the mid-eighteenth century. It is not impossible that James Pickford acquired an existing business as a going concern,¹⁴ but the argument of probability would be that it was James who introduced the Pickford family to the carrying trade.¹⁵

13 CHP/5. A check on the Warren estate papers with the Cheshire Record Office and Stockport Library revealed no rent books or other papers which might have thrown further light on this tenancy.

14 See Chapter 3.

15 In the late 1920s, O.M.Doy, Secretary of Pickfords, promoted some research into the firm's early history to try and establish the date of founding, but nothing was discovered before 1756. The Hon. Mary Pickford was working at the same time, and exchanged letters with Doy, see Pic. 4/16. A comment among Miss Pickford's extant notes indicated that she had concluded that it was James who started the business.

Digest of internal evidence of wills in the name of Pickford
in the Adlington and Poynton area

1. Matthew Pickford the Elder of Adlington in the parish of
Prestbury, yeoman and timber merchant

b. 1652 d. 3 July 1741 (buried at Prestbury)

Will dated: 4 December 1740 Probate: 29 October 1741

Refers to sons: John, George, Matthew, James

Daughter: Prothesia and husband George Priestnall

Elizabeth and husband John Worthington

Executors include: sons John and Matthew

Henry Richardson of Norbury, in parish
of Stockport, yeoman.

2. James Pickford of Lostock within Poynton, yeoman

Will dated: 14 June 1757 Probate: 2 November 1758

Refers to: sister Thomasin Hulme

brother-in-law Thomas Priestnall

nieces Prothesia, wife of George Priestnall,

Elizabeth, wife of John Worthington

nephews George and James Pickford, sons of his
late brother Matthew

nephew John Pickford of Lostock

Executors include: nephew John Pickford of Lostock

Peter Jamion of Poynton, Schoolmaster.

3 John Pickford of Adlington, yeoman

b. 1697 d. 15 September 1774 (Buried at Prestbury)

Will dated: 18 June, 1768 Probate 11 May 1775

Refers to: sons John, Matthew, James

daughters Alice, Ann (who is married)

son in law William Richardson

Executors include: Henry Richardson, farmer of Norbury

Peter Jammion, Schoolmaster of Poynton

Witnesses include: George Priestnall

4. Martha Pickford of Poynton, widow

b 1714 d. 15 May 1772 (buried at Prestbury)

Will dated: 15 February 1772 Probate 22 March 1773

Refers to: husband James (b. 1709 d. 10 May 1768, buried at Prestbury)

sons Matthew, George, Thomas,

daughter Mary Vaux, Elizabeth Higginson,
Martha Pickford (later 1773, m.
Matthew Priestnall)

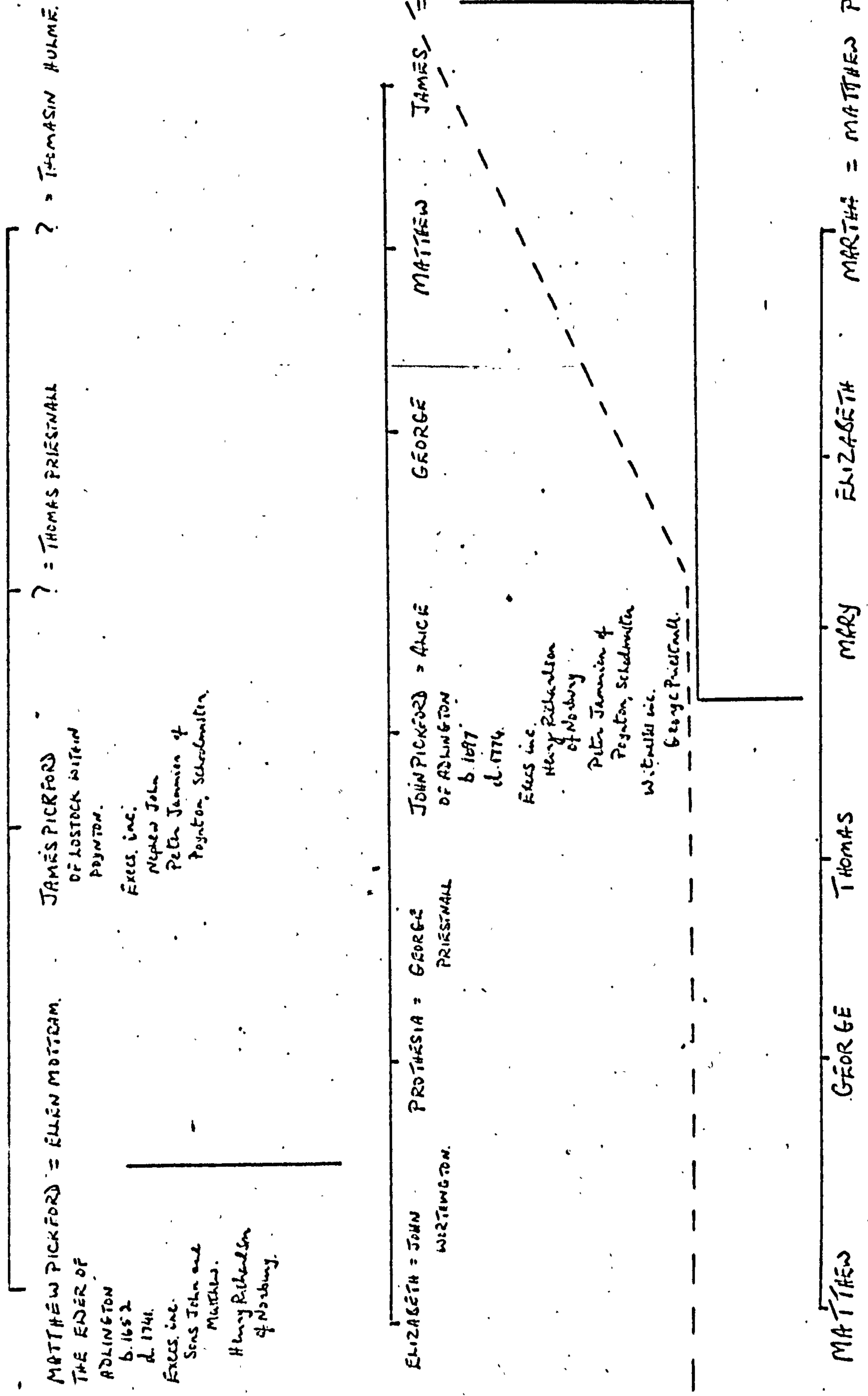
Executors: son Matthew
My friend Henry Richardson of Norbury, Cheshire

5. Matthew Pickford of Poynton, gentleman

b. 1741 d. 9 August 1799 (buried at Prestbury)

Will dated: 15 April 1799 Probate 27 June 1800

Executors: son Thomas
brother-in-law Matthew Priestnall of Stockport,
Liquor Merchant
John Barber of Liverpool, Timber Merchant.



APPENDIX 2.

Baxendale left a record, for each year ending 31 March from 1818 until 1867, of his profit cum salary, the value of his property including investments, interest and dividends, and household and other expenses. The only direct information to Pickfords would seem to be a document entitled 'Summary of Stock Account from 1st April 1817 to 1 April 1867, with memoranda relative to the commencement of the partnership.' The figures entered in column 1 of Table 6.1 follow the heading 'Credit of Stock Account', to which is added a note "Interest not included, placed to the credit of each partner half-yearly." This would seem to imply that the figures entered as 'Credit of Stock Account' are meant to be a statement of distributable profits, possibly on a crude 'total receipts net of total expenditure basis' made at the stock-taking closing the financial year. Interest on capital was apparently written in as a cost, but in what way capital was charged is not known. Since partners were required to re-invest their profit, precision would not be paramount, but some notional distribution would be required for the future charging of interest on the accumulated capital. Columns 3 and 4 attempt to compare this with an estimated actual profit distribution. Taking Baxendale's personal profit figure for each year and multiplying it by a factor determined by his known share in the partnership, a total distributed profit figure is obtained. Totalling these annual figures into five-year periods, Columns 5 and 6, the results show a reasonable match with those in Columns 1 and 2. Relatively small differences, as in 1822, 1832, 1842 and 1847, could be explained by accumulated error due to rounding, etc; larger differences, 1827, 1837, cannot be explained on the basis of the surviving evidence. In Table 10.1 there is a similar difference of match and the contrary between the two series. On the whole, however, it is felt that the two sets

Fig. 1 Pickfords' profits - Manchester
to London VAN 1818-1825

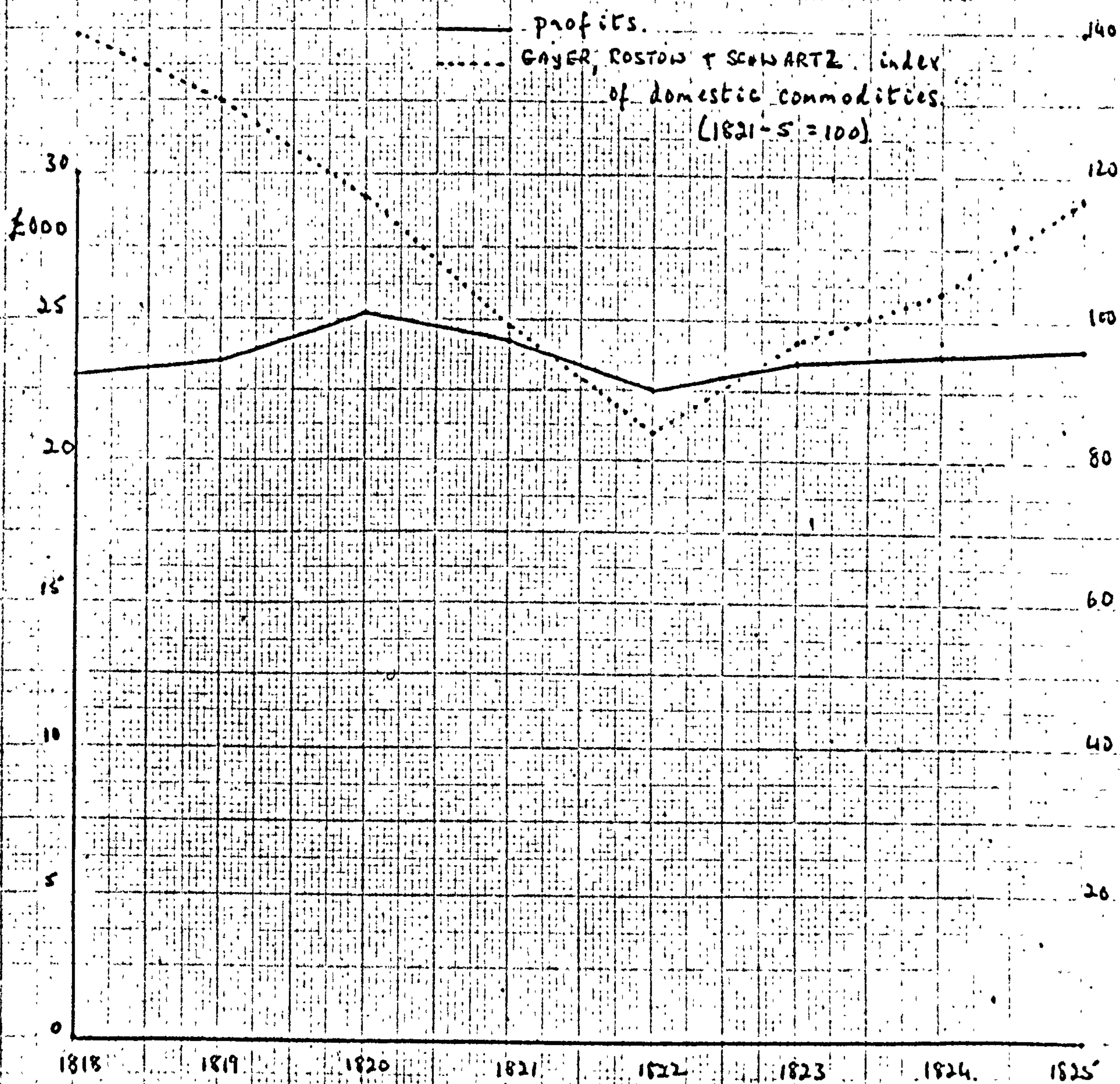
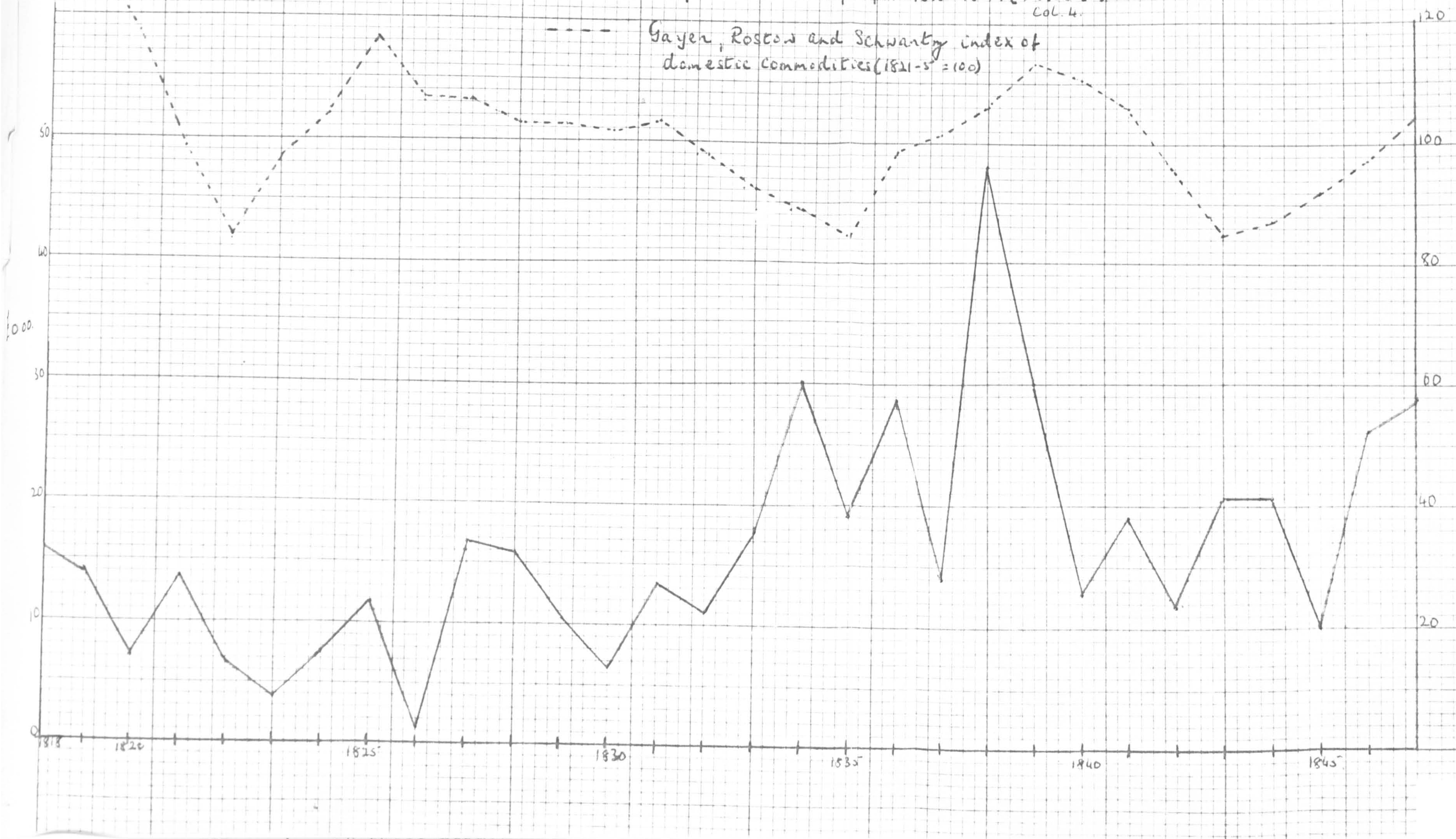


Fig. 2.

— Pickingford's estimated profits 1818-1847 (Table 6.1)
col. 4.

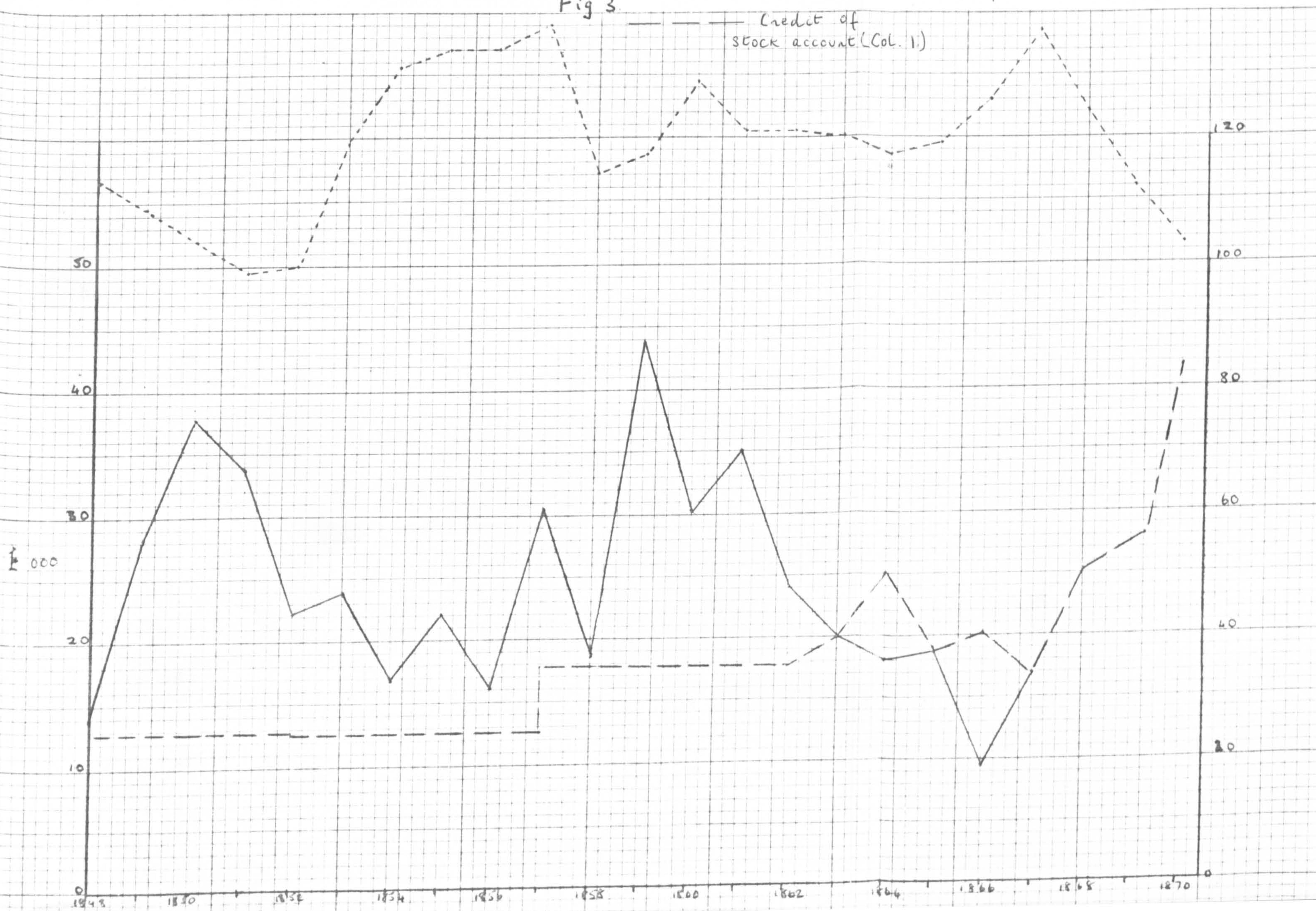
- - - Gayen, Roston and Schwantzy index of
domestic commodities (1821-5 = 100)



—— Pickfords' estimated profits, 1848 - 1870 (Table 10-1)
 Col. 4.
 --- Rousseau price index (average of 1865 and 1885 = 100)

Fig 3

Credit of
 stock account (Col. 1)



of figures show a sufficient degree of coincidence to support the tentative statements in the text.

It has proved impossible to discuss these figures except in their absolute terms. Figures 2 and 3, relating to table 6.1 and table 10.1 respectively, suggest that there is no obvious correspondence between the profit figures and one of the standard price series for the period. In both cases the movement of the profit curve is quite random in respect of the index. A useful contrast is provided by Fig.1. In this case, fluctuations in the profits on Pickfords' Manchester to London van, 1818-25, broadly correspond with the movements of the price index. The contrast is interesting. The van profits probably represented gross receipts less gross expenditure, that is, there was no intervention of accounting procedures. In this case the index would serve as a deflator. However in the other two cases the figures represent a sort of net profit i.e. after accounting procedures - which were evidently such as to prevent even the broadest relationship with price movements. The most informative ratio to have discovered would have been the rate of profit, but that is obviously impossible.

I would like to thank my wife and my colleague Dr. T. Gourvish for discussion of these points.

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PRIMARY SOURCES.

I. Manuscript sources.

The records of the business

1. Records deposited with British Transport Historical Records, Porchester road, London W.2.
The main body of Pickfords' records is on public deposit with the British Railways Board. They mainly comprise minutes of annual general meetings, 1901-9; of board meetings, 1901-1949; of directors' committee meetings 1907-1919 (with a gap March 1909 to June 1910); balance sheets and profit and loss accounts 1908-1911, 1912-1919. The rest of the records are of a miscellaneous kind, of which the most important are agency agreements between Pickfords and the LNWR and the Midland railway companies 1852-1887, together with related correspondence; - Journal and cash-book of the Manchester office (1817-1824); Journal of the London office (1899-1925); memoranda book (1829-35); various general books of newspaper cuttings, correspondence, memoranda, wills, etc, from the late eighteenth century.

These records are classified (Pic 1/1, Pic 2/1, etc) according to the principles described by L.C.Johnson 'Historical records of the British Transport Commission' Journal of Transport History Vol.1 (1953-4).

2. Records remaining with Pickfords. These were originally at Pickfords' office, 205 High Holborn, London W.C.1, but have now been transferred to 102 Black Stock Road, Finsbury Park, London N. 4
They are cited in the text as Pic HH. These records comprise a group of files relative to the history of Pickfords and the Baxendale family; a few contemporary letters, invoices etc; a copy of the brief diary of J.H.Baxendale. In addition are certain records, which, when consulted, were still retained by the accounts office, relative to the amalgamation with Carter Paterson in 1912, and the sale to Hays Wharf in 1920. The volume now used for the board minutes of Pickfords Travel Ltd. contain the minutes of Pickfords' A.G.M. 1909-1920.

Family Papers

1. Surviving papers of Joseph Baxendale, at Framfield Place, Uckfield, Sussex.
These are cited in the text as F.P.
The most useful items are three small bundles of correspondence between Baxendale and his father and mother

1806-1815; between Baxendale, Langton and Inman, 1817-20; between Baxendale and his sons, 1866-70; . There are also several small volumes of memmoranda re the business in the 1820s and 1830s, personal account and record books. There are several volumes of Baxendale's diary from the late 1830s, but they contain virtually no reference to his activities in Pickfords.

2. Surviving papers of the Pickford family.

1. Papers in the possession of Mr. C.H.Pickford, of Chelsea, London. These are a miscellaneous group of papers including various leases, bonds and agreements, maps and notices concerning the firm. They also include the partnership agreements of 1800^{and} 1817, and the deed of release, July 1860, by which Elizabeth Pickford the widow of Thomas Pickford II relinquished the family's remaining interest in the business to the Baxendales.
2. Papers belonging to the late Hon Dorothy Pickford, King Sterndale Hall, Derbyshire. These contain some correspondence relative to the business, and the deed of arrangement of 1838 by which Langton and Inman withdrew from Pickfords. Their other main content is the notes of the late Hon. Mary Pickford of research carried out in the 1930s, including her transcriptions from the Manchester Mercury and the Manchester Journal. A random testing of her notes, 25 entries, showed them to be accurate and reliable.
3. Papers belonging to Mr. E. Halfpenny of Ilford, Essex. In May 1815 Matthew Pickford II married Mrs. Elizabeth Halfpenny and in his will of the same year, which remained unaltered at his death in 1825, left any shares in Pickfords which his co-partners did not buy out to his wife and her heirs. Her son, F.W.Halfpenny, believed he had a right to a share in the business on the strength of this, and took transcripts of various wills, marriage settlements, etc., in order to prove it. The two volumes of records also contain a statement of James and Matthew Pickford'II debts in 1820, and their deed of composition. The main documents were published by Mr. E. Halfpenny in "Pickfords' expansion and crisis" Business History Vol. 1 (1958-9).

Other business papers and records

1. British Transport Historical Records..

Carter Paterson & Co: minutes of meetings of proprietors and board of directors 1887-1922; correspondence and memoranda relative to the amalgamation of 1912.

Canal Companies

- Ashby-de-la-Zouche: minutes, meetings of proprietors and committee 1799-1832.
- Birmingham canal navigations: letter-books 1793-1804, 1813-1822; general and tonnage register 1770-71, 1790-91; memoranda book 1819-28.
- Coventry canal navigation: orders of general meetings 1777-1790; rough minutes of committee meetings, 1790-1815; memorandum book 1802-1808; tonnage ledger 1801-2; rents book 1793-1823, 1834-58; letter books (inwards and outwards) 1831-3¹⁸³³⁻⁴ 1838-9, 1841-2, 1842, 1843, 1845⁸, (K. to R.)
- Grand Junction company: minutes of general assembly, 1793-1802; minutes of general committee 1805-1820; minutes of board 1816-1850; boat register 1818, 1821-23, 1830-32; Share register 1809-1837.
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- Macclesfield canal: minutes management committee 1834-46.
- Oxford company: committee minutes 1789-90, 1840-41; general book of historical letters 1787-1900; out-letter books 1831-6, 1836-45, 1845-6, 1846-51; in-letter books 1822, 1829-32, 1834-47 (annual volumes)
- Peak Forest company: minutes, committee of proprietors 1829-40.
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- Grand Junction: minutes, directors' committee 1833-43.
- Liverpool & Manchester: board minutes 1826-38.
- London & Birmingham: board minutes 1837-47; management committee 1837-8; goods committee 1844-48.
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1199/5 private ledger Blackburn 1793-1799;
1199/6 private ledger Blackburn 1798-1810

3 Manchester Central Reference Library: Archives Department

Peter Stubbs papers.

Dispatch book, outward consignments, 1811-15; orders and correspondence 1810, 1816 (H-R); steel book 1834-40.

Manchester & Wilmslow Trust, Manchester & Rusholme Trust various account books, day books from mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century.

Poor rates assessments 1733-56, 1770; Lamp tax 1765; Police tax 1770, 1771; valuation book 1812.

4 Chetham's Library, Manchester

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5 Eccles public library

Nasmyth, Gaskell & Co. collection: letter book 2, March to September 1838; letter book 5, May to Sept. 1839; letter book 6, Sept. 1839 to Jan. 1840.

6 Guildhall Library, London

Freedoms Fellowship of Carmen 1742-1797 GL. MS. 4915/2;
Freedoms admissions: Inholders company 1673-1820, GL. MS. 6651/1
Royal Exchange Assurance Company: fire policy registers:
97 vols, general ref GL. MS. 7253.
Vol 29, Jan 1795 to Nov 1795; Vol 30 March 1795 to March 1796
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II Printed sources

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Observance of the sabbath day 1831-2 (Vol. 7)

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Railroad communication 1837-8 (16)

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Railway accidents 1841 (13)

Railways 1844 (11)

Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton and Oxford &
Rugby railway bills 1845 (11)
Railways and canals amalgamations 1846 (13)
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Reports and evidence of royal commissions:-

On the gauge of railways 1846 (16)
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On London traffic Vol. 2 (Cd. 2751) 1905
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On canals and waterways Vol. 3 (Cd.) 1908; Vol. 5
(Cd. 4840) 1909. 3718

2 Trade Directories

(Chiefly the collection of the Guildhall Library, London,
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London 1677, 1736, 1740 and then at regular intervals, annually
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those of Kent, Lowndes, Critchett & Woods, Holden.
Also 1851, 1877, 1881.

Manchester (various editors) 1772, 1773, 1781, 1788, 1794, 1797
1800, 1804, 1808-9, then regularly to 1845.

Birmingham 1803, 1815, 1821, 1835

Derby 1842-3

Glasgow 1847-8, 1848-9, 1849-50 annually to 1866-7.

Leeds 1778, 1817, 1830, 1834

Liverpool (Gore) 1790, 1796, 1803, 1807, 1811, then regularly to
1835

Nottingham 1825

Sheffield 1817, 1825, 1833, 1837

Stafford & Potteries 1846

Miscellaneous

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British directory 1784; London directory 1790

Universal British directory, London and the provinces, several
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Pigot. Commercial directory 1814-15, 1816-17, 1818, 1819-20, 1824
Cheshire 1830.

3 Newspapers

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5. Others

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